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THE WORKS OF GEORGE MEREDITH

MEMORIAL EDITION

VOLUME

IV

Near Copsham

GEORGE MEREDITH

SANDRA BELLONI

ORIGINALLY

EMILIA IN ENGLAND

VOL. II

Memorial Edition

12139

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ILLUSTRATION

NEAR COPSHAM . . . . . *Frontispiece*

This scene represents a portion of the road between Oxshott and Esher, near Copsham Cottage.

From a photograph taken in 1909 *by Frederick H. Evans.*

CHAPTER XXXI

BESWORTH LAWN

'I AM curious to see what you will make of this gathering. I can cook a small company myself. It requires the powers of a giantess to mix a body of people in the open air; and all that is said of commanders of armies shall be said of you, if you succeed.'

This was Lady Gosstre's encouragement to the fair presidents of the fête on Besworth Lawn. There had been a time when they would have cried out internally: '*We* will do it, fail who may.' That fallow hour was over. Their sole thought was to get through the day. A little feverish impulse of rivalry with her great pattern may have moved Arabella; but the pressure of grief and dread, and the contrast between her actions and feelings, forcibly restrained a vain display. As a consequence, she did her duty better, and won applause from the great lady's moveable court on eminences of the ground.

'These girls are clever,' she said to Lady Charlotte. 'They don't bustle too much. They don't make too distinct a difference of tone with the different sets. I shall propose Miss Pole as secretary to our Pin and Needle Relief Society.'

'Do,' was the reply. 'There is also the Polish Dance Committee; and, if she has any energy left, she might be treasurer to the Ladies' General Revolution Ball.'

'That is an association with which I am not acquainted,' said Lady Gosstre, directing her eye-glass on the field. 'Here comes young Pole. He 's gallant, they

tell me, and handsome: he studies us too obviously. That 's a mistake to be corrected, Charlotte. One doesn't like to see a pair of eyes measuring us against a preconception *quelconque*. Now, there is our Ionian Am . . . but you have corrected me, Merthyr :—host, if you please. But, see! What is the man doing? Is he smitten with madness? '

Mr. Pericles had made a furious dash at the band in the centre of the lawn, scattered their music, and knocked over the stands. When his gesticulations had been observed for some moments, Freshfield Sumner said: 'He has the look of a plucked hen, who remembers that she once clapped wings, and tries to recover the practice.'

'Very good,' said Lady Gosstre. She was not one who could be unkind to the professional wit. 'And the music-leaves go for feathers. What has the band done to displease him? I thought the playing was good.'

'The instruments appear to have received a dismissal,' said Lady Charlotte. 'I suppose this is a clearing of the stage for coming alarums and excursions. Behold! the "female element" is agitated. There are—can you reckon at this distance, Merthyr?—twelve, fourteen of my sex entreating him in the best tragic fashion. Can he continue stern? '

'They seem to be as violent as the women who tore up Orpheus,' said Lady Gosstre.

Tracy Runningbrook shrieked, in a paroxysm, 'Splendid! ' from his couch on the sward, and immediately ran off with the idea, bodily.

'Have I stumbled anywhere? ' Lady Gosstre leaned to Mr. Powys.

He replied with a satiric sententiousness that told Lady Gosstre what she wanted to know.

'This is the isolated case where a little knowledge is truly dangerous,' said Lady Gosstre. 'I prohibit girls

from any allusion to the classics until they have taken their degree and are warranted not to open the wrong doors. On the whole, don't you think, Merthyr, it 's better for women to avoid that pool ? '

' And accept what the noble creature chooses to bring to us in buckets,' added Lady Charlotte. ' What is your opinion, Georgey ? I forget : Merthyr has thought you worthy of instruction.'

' Merthyr taught me in camp,' said Georgiana, looking at her brother—her face showing peace and that confirmed calm delight habitual to it. ' We found that there are times in war when you can do nothing, and you are feverish to be employed. Then, if you can bring your mind to study, you are sure to learn quickly. I liked nothing better than Latin Grammar.'

' Studying Latin Grammar to the tune of great guns must be a new sensation,' Freshfield Sumner observed.

' The pleasure is in getting rid of all sensation,' said she. ' I mean you command it without at all crushing your excitement. You cannot feel a fuller happiness than when you look back on those hours : at least, I speak for myself.'

' So,' said Lady Gosstre, ' Georgey did not waste her time after all, Charlotte ? '

What the latter thought was : ' She could not handle a sword or fire a pistol. Would *I* have consented to be mere camp-baggage ? ' Yet no woman admired Georgiana Ford so much. Disappointment vitiated many of Lady Charlotte's first impulses ; and not until strong antagonism had thrown her upon her generosity could she do justice to the finer natures about her. There was full life in her veins ; and she was hearing the thirty fatal bells that should be music to a woman, if melancholy music ; and she had not lived. Time, that sounded in her ears, as it kindled no past, spoke of no future. She

was in unceasing rivalry with all of her sex who had a passion, or a fixed affection, or even an employment. A sense that she was wronged by her fate haunted this lady. Rivalry on behalf of a man she would have held mean—she would have plucked it from her bosom at once. She was simply envious of those who in the face of death could say, 'I have lived.' Pride, and the absence of any power of self-inspection, kept her blind to her disease. No recollection gave her joy save of the hours in the hunting-field. There she led gallantly; but it was not because of leading that she exulted. There the quick blood struck on her brain like wine, and she seemed for a time to have some one among the crowns of life. An object—who cared how small?—was ahead: a poor old fox trying to save his brush; and Charlotte would have it if the master of cunning did not beat her. 'It 's my natural thirst for blood,' she said. She did not laugh as she thought now and then that the old red brush dragging over grey dews toward a yellow *yolk* in the curdled winter-morning sky, was the single thing that could make her heart throb.

Brookfield was supported in its trial by the discomfiture of the Tinleys. These girls, with their brother, had evidently plotted to 'draw out' Mrs. Chump. They had asked concerning her, severally; and hearing that she had not returned from town, had each shown a blank face, or had been doubtful of the next syllable. Of Wilfrid, Emilia, and Mr. Pole, question and answer were interchanged. 'Wilfrid will come in a few minutes. Miss Belloni, you know, is preparing for Italy. Papa? Papa, I really do fear will not be able to join us.' Such was Brookfield's concerted form of reply. The use of it, together with the gaiety of dancing blood, gave Adela (who believed that she ought to be weeping, and could have wept easily) strange twitches of what I would

ask permission to call the juvenile 'shrug-philosophy.' As thus: 'What creatures we are, but life is so!' And again, 'Is not merriment dreadful when a duty!' She was as miserable as she could be: but not knowing that youth furnished a plea available, the girl was ashamed of being cheerful at all. Edward Buxley's sketch of Mr. Pericles scattering his band, sent her into muffled screams of laughter; for which she did internal penance so bitter that, for her to be able to go on at all, the shrug-philosophy was positively necessary. Mr. Pericles himself saw the sketch, and remarked critically, 'It is zat I have more hair': following which, he tapped the signal for an overture to commence, and at the first stroke took a run, with his elbows clapping exactly as the shrewd hand of Edward had drawn him.

'See him—zat fellow,' Mr. Pericles said to Laura Tinley, pointing to the leader. 'See him pose a maestro! zat leads zis tintamarre. He is a hum—a bug!'

Laura did the vocal caricaturing, when she had gathered plenty of matter of this kind. Altogether, as host, Mr. Pericles accomplished his duty in furnishing amusement.

Late in the afternoon, Sir Twickenham Pryme and Wilfrid arrived in company. The baronet went straight to Cornelia. Wilfrid beckoned to Adela, from whom he heard of his father's illness at the hotel in town, and the conditions imposed on them. He nodded, said lightly, 'Where 's Emilia?' and nodded again to the answer, 'With papa,' and then stopped as he was walking off to one of the groups. 'After all, it won't do for us to listen to the whims of an invalid. I 'm going back. You needn't say you 've seen me.'

'We have the doctor's most imperative injunction, dearest,' pleaded Adela, deceived for a moment. 'Papa's illness is mental chiefly. He is able to rise and will be here very soon, if he is not in any way crossed. For

heaven's sake, command yourself as we have done—painfully indeed! Besides, you have been seen.'

'Has she——?' Wilfrid began; and toned an additional carelessness, 'She writes, of course?'

'No, not once; and we are angry with her. It looks like ingratitude, or stupidity. She can write.'

'People might say that we are not behaving well,' returned Wilfrid, repeating that he must go to town. But now Edward Buxley came running with a message from the aristocratic heights, and thither Wilfrid walked captive—saying in Adela's ear, 'Don't be angry with her.'

Adela thought, very justly, 'I shall, if you 've been making a fool of her, naughty boy!'

Wilfrid saluted the ladies, and made his bow of introduction to Georgiana Ford, at whom he looked twice, to confirm an impression that she was the perfect contrast to Emilia; and for this reason he chose not to look at her again. Lady Charlotte dropped him a quick recognition.

If Brookfield could have thrown the burden from its mind, the day was one to feel a pride in. Three Circles were present, and Brookfield denominated two that it had passed through, and patronized all—from Lady Gosstre (aristocracy) to the Tinley set (lucre), and from these to the representative Sumner girls (cultivated poverty). There were also intellectual, scientific, and Art circles to deal with; music, pleasant to hear, albeit condemned by Mr. Pericles; agreeable chatter, courtly flirtation and homage, and no dread of the defection of the letter H from their family.

'I feel more and more convinced,' said Adela, meeting Arabella, 'that we can have really no cause for alarm; otherwise papa would not have been cruel to his children.' Arabella kindly reserved her opinion. 'So let us try

and be happy,' continued Adela, determining to be encouraged by silence. With that she went on tiptoe gracefully and blew a kiss to her sister's lips. Running to Captain Gambier, she said, 'Do you really enjoy this?'

'Charming,' replied the ever-affable gentleman. 'If I might only venture to say what makes it so infinitely!'

Much to her immediate chagrin at missing a direct compliment, which would have had to be parried, and might have led to 'vistas,' the too sprightly young lady found herself running on: 'It 's as nice as sin, without the knowledge that you are sinning.'

'Oh! do you think that part of it disagreeable?' said the Captain.

'I think the heat terrific': she retrieved her ground.

'Coquet et coquette,' muttered Lady Charlotte, observing them from a distance; and wondered whether her sex might be strongly represented in this encounter.

It was not in the best taste, nor was it perhaps good policy (if I may quote the Tinley set), for the ladies of Brookfield to subscribe openly to the right of certain people present to be exclusive. Arabella would have answered: 'Lady Gosstre and her party cannot associate with you to your mutual pleasure and profit; and do you therefore blame her for not attempting what would fail ludicrously?' With herself, as she was not sorry to show, Lady Gosstre could associate. Cornelia had given up work to become a part of the Court. Adela made flying excursions over the lawn. Laura Tinley had the field below and Mr. Pericles to herself. That anxious gentleman consulted his watch from time to time, as if he expected the birth of an event.

Lady Gosstre grew presently aware that there was more acrimony in Freshfield Sumner's replies to Sir Twickenham (whom he had seduced into a political argument) than the professional wit need employ; and

as Mr. Powys's talk was getting so attractive that the Court had become crowded, she gave a hint to Georgiana and Lady Charlotte, prompt lieutenants, whose retirement broke the circle.

'I never shall understand how it was done,' Adela said subsequently. It is hoped that everybody sees the importance of understanding such points.

She happened to be standing alone when a messenger came up to her and placed a letter in her hand, addressed to her sister Cornelia. Adela walked slowly up to the heights. She knew Mr. Barrett's handwriting. 'Good heavens!'—her thought may be translated out of Fine Shades—'does C. really in her heart feel so blind to our situation that she can go on playing still?' When she reached the group it was to hear Mr. Powys speaking of Mr. Barrett. Cornelia was very pale, and stood wretchedly in contrast among the faces. Adela beckoned her to step aside. 'Here is a letter,' she said: 'there 's no postmark. What has been the talk of that man?'

'Do you mean of Mr. Barrett?' Cornelia replied:—'that his father was a baronet, and a madman, who has just disinherited him.'

'Just?' cried Adela. She thought of the title. Cornelia had passed on. A bizarre story of Mr. Barrett's father was related to Adela by Sir Twickenham. She grappled it with her sense, and so got nothing out of it. 'Disinherited him because he wrote to his father, who was dying, to say that he had gained a livelihood by playing the organ! He had a hatred of music? It 's incomprehensible! You know, Sir Twickenham, the interest we take in Mr. Barrett.' The masked anguish of Cornelia's voice hung in her ears. She felt that it was now possible Cornelia might throw over the rich for the penniless baronet, and absolutely for an instant she

thought nakedly, 'The former ought not to be lost to the family.' Thick clouds obscured the vision. Lady Gosstre had once told her that the point of Sir Twickenham's private character was his susceptibility to ridicule. Her ladyship had at the same time complimented his discernment in conjunction with Cornelia. 'Yes,' Adela now thought; 'but if my sister shows that she is not so wise as she looks!' Cornelia's figure disappeared under the foliage bordering Besworth Lawn.

As usual, Arabella had all the practical labour—a fact that was noticed from the observant heights. 'One sees *mère de famille* written on that young woman,' was the eulogy she won from Lady Gosstre. How much would the great dame have marvelled to behold the ambition beneath the bustling surface! Arabella was feverish, and Freshfield Sumner reported brilliant things uttered by her. He became after a time her attendant, *aide*, and occasional wit-foil. They had some sharp exchanges: and he could not but reflect on the pleasure her keen zest of appreciation gave him compared with Cornelia's grave smile, which had often kindled in him profane doubts of the positive brightness, or rapidity of her intelligence.

'Besworth at sunset! What a glorious picture to have living before you every day!' said Lady Charlotte to her companion.

Wilfrid flushed. She read his look; and said, when they were out of hearing, 'What a place for old people to sit here near the end of life! The idea of it makes one almost forgive the necessity for getting old—doesn't it? Tracy Runningbrook might make a poem about silver heads and sunset—something, you know! Very easy cantering then—no hunting! I suppose one wouldn't have even a desire to go fast—a sort of cock-horse, just as we began with. The stables, let me tell

you, are too near the scullery. One is bound to devise measures for the protection of the morals of the household.'

While she was speaking, Wilfrid's thoughts ran: 'My time has come to strike for liberty.'

This too she perceived, and was prepared for him.

He said: 'Lady Charlotte, I feel that I must tell you . . . I fear that I have been calculating rather more hopefully . . .' Here the pitfall of sentiment yawned before him on a sudden. 'I mean' (he struggled to avoid it, but was at the brink in the next sentence)—'I mean, dear lady, that I had hopes . . . Besworth pleased you . . . to offer you this . . .'

'With yourself?' she relieved him. A different manner in a protesting male would have charmed her better. She excused him, knowing what stood in his way.

'*That* I scarcely dared to hope,' said Wilfrid, bewildered to see the loose chain he had striven to cast off gather tightly round him.

'You do hope it?'

'I have.'

'You have hoped that I . . .' (she was not insolent by nature, and corrected the form)—'to marry me?'

'Yes, Lady Charlotte, I—I had that hope . . . if I could have offered this place—Besworth. I find that my father will never buy it; I have misunderstood him.'

He fixed his eyes on her, expecting a cool, or an ironical, rejoinder to end the colloquy;—after which, fair freedom! She answered, 'We may do very well without it.'

Wilfrid was not equal to a start and the trick of rapturous astonishment. He heard the words like the shooting of dungeon-bolts, thinking, 'Oh, heaven! if

at the first I had only told the woman I do not love her ! ' But that sentimental lead had ruined him. And, on second thoughts, how could he have spoken thus to the point, when they had never previously dealt in anything save sentimental implications ? The folly was in his speaking at all. The game was now in Lady Charlotte's hands.

Adela, in another part of the field, had released herself by a consummate use of the same weapon Wilfrid had so clumsily handled. Her object was to put an end to the absurd and compromising sighs of Edward Buxley ; and she did so with the amiable contempt of a pupil dismissing a first instructor in an art—' We saw from the beginning it could not be, Edward.' The enamoured caricaturist vainly protested that he had not seen it from the beginning, and did not now. He recalled to her that she had said he was ' her first.' She admitted the truth, with eyes dwelling on him, until a ringlet got displaced. Her first. To be that, sentimental man would perish in the fires. To have been that will sometimes console him, even when he has lived to see what a thing he was who caught the budding fancy. The unhappy caricaturist groaned between triumph as a leader, and anguish at the prospect of a possible host of successors. King in that pure bosom, the thought would come—King of a mighty line, mayhap ! And sentimental man, awakened to this disastrous view of things, endures shrewder pangs of rivalry in the contemplation of his usurping posterity than if, as do they, he looked forward to a tricked, perfumed, pommaded whipster, pirouetting like any Pierrot—the enviable image of the one who realized her first dream, and to whom specially missioned angels first opened the golden gates of her heart.

' I have learnt to see, Edward, that you do not honour me with a love you have diverted from one worthier than

I am ' ; and in answer to the question whether, though having to abjure her love, she loved him : ' No, no ; it is my Arabella I love. I love, I will love, no one but her ' —with sundry caressing ejaculations that spring a thirst for kisses, and a tender ' putting of the case,' now and then.

So much for Adela's part in the conflict. Edward was unaware that the secret of her mastering him was, that she was now talking common-sense in the tone of sentiment. He, on the contrary, talked sentiment in the tone of common-sense. Of course he was beaten : and O, you young lovers, when you hear the dear lips setting what you call the world's harsh language to this music, know that an hour has struck for you ! It is a fatal sound to hear. Edward believed that his pleading had produced an effect when he saw Miss Adela's bosom rise as with a weight on it. The burden of her thoughts was—' How big and heavy Edward's eyes look when he is not amusing ! ' To get rid of him she said, as with an impassioned coldness, ' Go.' Her figure, repeating this under closed eyelids, was mysterious, potent. When he exclaimed, ' Then I *will* go,' her eyelids lifted wide : she shut them instantly, showing at the same time a slight tightening-in of the upper lip. You beheld a creature tied to the stake of Duty.

But she was exceedingly youthful, and had not reckoned upon man's being a live machine, possessing impulses of his own. A violent seizure of her waist, and enough of kisses to make up the sum popularly known as a ' shower,' stopped her performance. She struggled, and muttered passionately to be released. ' We are seen,' she hazarded. At the repetition, Edward, accustomed to dread the warning, let her go and fled. Turning hurriedly about, Adela found that she had spoken truth unawares, and never wished so much that she had lied.

Sir Twickenham Pryme came forward to her, with his usual stiff courtly step.

'If you could have been a little—a little earlier,' she murmured, with an unflurried face, laying a trembling hand in his; and thus shielded herself from a suspicion.

'Could I know that I was wanted?' He pressed her hand.

'I only know that I wish I had not left your side,' said she—adding, 'Though you must have thought me what, if I were a man, you Members of Parliament would call "a bore," for asking perpetual questions.'

'Nay, an apposite interrogation is the guarantee of a proper interest in the subject,' said the baronet.

Cornelia was very soon reverted to.

'Her intellect is contemplative,' said Adela, exhibiting marvellous mental composure. 'She would lose her unerring judgement in active life. She cannot weigh things in her mind rapidly. She is safe if her course of action is clear.'

Sir Twickenham reserved his opinion of the truth of this. 'I wonder whether she can forgive those who offend or insult her, easily?'

A singular pleasure warmed Adela's veins. Her cheeks kindling, she replied, giving him her full face. 'No; if they are worthy of punishment. But'—and now he watched a downcast profile—'one must have some forgiveness for fools.'

'Indeed, you speak like charity out of the windows of wisdom,' said the baronet.

'Do you not require in Parliament to be tolerant at times?' Adela pursued.

He admitted it, and to her outcry of 'Oh, that noble public life!' smiled deprecatingly—'My dear young lady, if you only knew the burden it brings!'

'It brings its burden,' said Adela, correcting, with a most proper instinct, another enthusiastic burst. 'At the same time the honour is above the load. Am I talking too romantically? You are at least occupied.'

'Nine-tenths of us to no very good purpose,' the baronet appended.

She rejoined: 'If it were but a fraction, the good done would survive.'

'And be more honourable to do, perhaps,' he ejaculated. 'The consolation should be great.'

'And is somehow small,' said she; and they laughed softly.

At this stage, Adela was 'an exceedingly interesting young person' in Sir Twickenham's mental register. He tried her on politics and sociology. She kept her ears open, and followed his lead carefully—venturing here and there to indicate an opinion, and suggesting dissent in a pained interrogation. Finally, 'I confess,' she said, 'I understand much less than I am willing to think; and so I console myself with the thought that, after all, the drawing-room, and the . . . the kitchen? —well, an educated "female" must serve her term there, if she would be anything better than a mere ornament, even in the highest walks of life—I mean the household is our sphere. From that we mount to companionship —if we can.'

Amazement of Sir Twickenham, on finding his own thought printed, as it were, on the air before him by these pretty lips!

The conversation progressed, until Adela, by chance, turned her eyes up a cross pathway and perceived her sister Cornelia standing with Mr. Barrett under a beech. The man certainly held one of her hands pressed to his heart; and her attitude struck a doubt whether his other hand was disengaged or her waist free. Adela walked

nervously on without looking at the baronet ; she knew by his voice presently that his eyes had also witnessed the sight. 'Two in a day,' she thought ; 'what will he imagine us to be!' The baronet was thinking : 'For your sister exposed, you display more agitation than for yourself insulted.'

Adela found Arabella in so fresh a mood that she was sure good news had been heard. It proved that Mrs. Chump had sent a few lines in a letter carried by Braintop, to this effect : 'My dears all! I found your father on his back in bed, and he discharged me out of the room ; and the sight of me put him on his legs, and you will soon see him. Be civil to Mr. Braintop, who is a faithful young man, of great merit, and show your gratitude to—Martha Chump.'

Braintop confirmed the words of the letter : and then Adela said—'You will do us the favour to stay and amuse yourself here. To-night there will be a bed at Brookfield.'

'What will he do?' Arabella whispered.

'Associate with the Tinleys,' returned Adela.

In accordance with the sentiment here half concealed, Brookfield soon showed that it had risen from the hour of depression when it had simply done its duty. Arabella formed an opposition-Court to the one in which she had studied ; but Mr. Pericles defeated her by constantly sending to her for advice concerning the economies of the feast. Nevertheless, she exhibited good pretensions to social queendom, both personal and practical ; and if Freshfield Sumner, instead of his crisp waspish comments on people and things, had seconded her by keeping up a two-minutes' flow of talk from time to time, she might have thought that Lady Gosstre was only luckier than herself—not better endowed.

Below, the Tinleys and their set surrounded Mr.

Pericles—prompting him, as was seen, to send up continual mesages. One, to wit, 'Is there to be dancing to-night?' being answered, 'Now, if you please,' provoked sarcastic cheering; and Laura ran up to say, 'How kind of you! We appreciate it. Continue to dispense blessings on poor mortals.'

'By the way, though' (Freshfield took his line from the calm closed lips of his mistress), 'poor mortals are not in the habit of climbing Olympus to ask favours.'

'I perceived no barrier,' quoth Laura.

'Audacity never does.'

'Pray, how am I to be punished?'

Freshfield paused for a potent stroke. 'Not like Semele. She saw the God:—you never will!'

While Laura was hanging on the horrid edge between a false laugh and a starting blush, Arabella said: 'That visual excommunication has been pronounced years ago, Freshfield.'

'Ah! then he hasn't changed his name in heaven?' Laura touched her thus for the familiar use of the gentleman's Christian name.

'You must not imagine that very great changes are demanded of those who can be admitted.'

'I really find it hotter than below,' said Laura, flying.

Arabella's sharp eyes discerned a movement in Lady Gosstre's circle; and she at once went over to her, and entreated the great lady, who set her off so well, not to go. The sunset fronted Besworth Lawn; the last light of day was danced down to inspiriting music: and now Arabella sent word for Besworth hall-doors and windows to be opened; and on the company beginning to disperse, there beckoned promise of a brilliant supper-table. 'Admirable!' said Lady Gosstre, and the encomium was general among the crowd surrounding Arabella; for

up to this point the feasting had been delicate, and something like plain hunger prevailed. Indeed, Arabella had heard remarks of a bad nature, which she traced to the Tinley set, and bore with, to meet her present reward. Making light of her triumph, she encouraged Freshfield to start a wit-contest, and took part in it herself, with the gaiety of an unoccupied mind. Her sisters had aforetime more than once challenged her supremacy, but they bowed to it now; and Adela especially did when, after a ringing hit to Freshfield (which the Tinleys might also take to their own bosoms), she said in an undertone, 'What is there between C. and ——?' Surprised by this astonishing vigilance and power of thinking below the surface while she performed above it, Adela incautiously turned her face toward the meditative baronet, and was humiliated by Arabella's mute indication of contempt for her coming answer. This march across the lawn to the lighted windows of Besworth was the culmination of Brookfield's joy, and the crown for which it had striven; though for how short a term it was to be worn was little known. Was it not a very queenly sphere of Fine Shades and Nice Feelings that Brookfield had realized?

In Arabella's conscience lay a certain reproach of herself for permitting the 'vice of a lower circle' to cling to her—viz., she had still betrayed a stupid hostility to the Tinleys: she had rejoiced to see them incapable of mixing with any but their own set, and thus be stamped publicly for what they were. She had struggled to repress it, and yet, continually, her wits were in revolt against her judgement. Perhaps one reason was that Albert Tinley had haunted her steps at an early part of the day; and Albert—a sickening City young man, 'full of insolence, and half eyeglass,' according to Freshfield—had once ventured to propose for her.

The idea that the Tinleys strove to catch at her skirts made Arabella spiteful. Up to the threshold of Besworth, Freshfield, Mr. Powys, Tracy, and Arabella kept the wheel of a dazzling run of small-talk, throwing intermittent sparks. Laura Tinley would press up, apparently to hear, but in reality (as all who knew her could see) with the object of being a rival representative of her sex in this illustrious rare encounter of divine intelligences. 'You are anxious to know?' said Arabella hesitatingly.

'To know, dear?' echoed Laura.

'There was, I presumed, something you did not hear.' Arabella was half ashamed of the rudeness to which her antagonism to Laura's vulgarity forced her.

'Oh! I hear everything,' Laura assured her.

'Indeed!' said Arabella. 'By the way, who conducts you?' (Laura was on Edward Buxley's arm.) 'Oh! will you go to'—such and such an end of the table. 'And if, Lady Gosstre, I may beg of you to do me the service to go there also,' was added aloud; and lower, but quite audibly, 'Mr. Pericles will have music, so there can be no talking.' This, with the *soupçon* of a demi-shrug; 'You will not suffer much' being implied. Laura said to herself, 'I am not a fool.' A moment after, Arabella was admitting in her own mind, as well as Fine Shades could interpret it, that she was. On entering the dining-hall, she beheld two figures seated at the point whither Laura was led by her partner. These were Mrs. Chump and Mr. Pole, with champagne glasses in their hands. Arabella was pushed on by the inexorable crowd of hungry people behind.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SUPPER

DESPITE the pouring in of the flood of guests about the tables, Mrs. Chump and Mr. Pole sat apparently unconcerned in their places, and, as if to show their absolute indifference to observation and opinion, went through the ceremony of drinking to one another, upon which they nodded and chuckled: a suspicious eye had the option of divining that they used the shelter of the tablecloth for an interchange of squeezes. This would have been further strengthened by Mrs. Chump's arresting exclamation, 'Pole! Company!' Mr. Pole looked up. He recognized Lady Gosstre, and made an attempt, in his usual brisk style, to salute her. Mrs. Chump drew him back. 'Nothin' but his legs, my lady,' she whispered. 'There 's nothin' sets 'm up like champagne, my dears!' she called out to the three of Brookfield.

Those ladies were now in the hall, gazing, as mildly as humanity would allow, at their common destiny, thus startlingly displayed. There was no doubt in the bosom of either one of them that exposure was to follow this prelude. Mental resignation was not even demanded of them—merely physical. They did not seek comfort in an interchange of glances, but dropped their eyes, and masked their sight as they best could. Cæsar assassinated did a similar thing.

'My dears!' pursued Mrs. Chump, in Irish exaggerated by wine, 'I 've found 'm for ye! And if ye 'd seen 'm this afternoon—the little peaky, shaky fellow that he was! and a doctor, too, feelin' his pulse. Is ut slow, says I, doctor? and draws a bottle of cham-

pagne. He could hardly stand before his first glass. 'Pon my hon'r, my lady, ye naver saw s'ch a change in a mortal bein'.—Pole, didn't ye go "ha, ha!" now, and seem to be nut-cracking with your fingers? He did; and if ye aver saw an astonished doctor! Why, says I, doctor, ye think ut 's maguc! Why, where 's the secret? *I drink with 'm*, to be sure! And you go and do that, my lord doctor, my dear Mr. Doctor! Do ut all round, and your patients 'll bless your feet. Why, isn't cheerful society and champagne the vary best of medicine, if onnly the blood 'll go of itself a little? The fault 's in his legs; he 's all right at top!—if he 'd smooth his hair a bit.'

Checking her tongue, Mrs. Chump performed this service lightly for him, in the midst of his muttered comments on her Irish.

The fact was manifest to the whole assembly, that they had indeed been drinking champagne to some purpose.

Wilfrid stepped up to two of his sisters, warning them hurriedly not to go to their father: Adela he arrested with a look, but she burst the restraint to fulfil a child's duty. She ran up gracefully, and taking her father's hand, murmured a caressing 'Dear papa!'

'There—all right—quite right—quite well,' Mr. Pole repeated. 'Glad to see you all: go away.'

He tried to look kindly out of the nervous fit into which a word, in a significant tone, from one of his daughters had instantly plunged him. Mrs. Chump admonished her: 'Will ye undo all that I 've been doin' this blessed day?'

'Glad you haven't missed the day altogether, sir,' Wilfrid greeted his father in an offhand way.

'Ah, my boy!' went the old man, returning him what was meant for a bluff nod.

Lady Charlotte gave Wilfrid an open look. It meant:

'If you can act like that, and know as much as I know, you are worth more than I reckoned.' He talked evenly and simply, and appeared on the surface as composed as any of the guests present. Nor was he visibly disturbed when Mrs. Chump, catching his eye, addressed him aloud :

'Ye 'd have been more grateful to me to have brought little Belloni as well now, I know, Mr. Wilfrud. But I was just obliged to leave her at the hotel ; for Pole can't endure her. He 'bomunates the sight of 'r. If ye aver saw a dog burnt by the fire, Pole 's second to 'm, if onnly ye speak that garl's name.'

The head of a strange musician, belonging to the band stationed outside, was thrust through one of the window apertures. Mr. Pericles beckoned him imperiously to retire, and perform. He objected, and an altercation in bad English diverted the company. It was changed to Italian. 'Mia figlia,' seized Wilfrid's ear. Mr. Pericles bellowed, 'Allegro.' Two minutes after Braintop felt a touch on his shoulder ; and Wilfrid, speaking in a tone of friend to friend, begged him to go to town by the last train and remove Miss Belloni to an hotel, which he named. 'Certainly,' said Braintop ; 'but if I meet her father . . . ?' Wilfrid summoned champagne for him ; whereupon Mrs. Chump cried out, 'Ye 're kind to wait upon the young man, Mr. Wilfrud ; and that Mr. Braintop 's an invalu'ble young man. And what do ye want with the hotel, when we 've left it, Mr. P*a*ricles ?'

The Greek raised his head from Mr. Pole, shrugging at her openly. He and Wilfrid then measured eyes a moment. 'Some champagne togezer ?' said Mr. Pericles. 'With all my heart,' was the reply ; and their glasses were filled, and they bowed, and drank. Wilfrid took his seat, drew forth his pocket-book ; and while talking affably to Lady Charlotte beside him, and affecting once

or twice to ponder over her remarks, or to meditate a fitting answer, wrote on a slip of paper under the table :—

'*Mine! my angel! You will see me to-morrow.*
'YOUR LOVER.'

This, being inserted in an envelope, with zig-zag letters of address to form Emilia's name, he contrived to pass to Braintop's hands, and resumed his conversation with Lady Charlotte, who said, when there was nothing left to discover, 'But what is it you concoct down there?' 'I!' cried Wilfrid, lifing his hands, and so betraying himself after the fashion of the very innocent. She despised any reading of acts not on the surface, and nodded to the explanation he gave—to wit: 'By the way, do you mean—have you noticed my habit of touching my fingers' ends as I talk? I count them backwards and forwards.'

'Shows nervousness,' said Lady Charlotte; 'you are a boy.'

'Exceedingly a boy!'

'Now I put a finger on his vanity,' said she; and thought indeed that she had played on him.

'Mr. Pole,' (Lady Gosstre addressed that gentleman,) 'I must hope that you will leave this dining-hall as it is; there is nothing in the neighbourhood to match it!'

'Delightful!' interposed Laura Tinley; 'but is it settled?'

Mr. Pole leaned forward to her ladyship; and suddenly catching the sense of her words, 'Ah, why not?' he said, and reached his hand to some champagne, which he raised to his mouth, but drank nothing of. Reflection appeared to tell him that his safety lay in drinking, and he drained the glass at a gulp. Mrs. Chump had it filled immediately, and explained to a wondering neighbour, 'It 's that that keeps 'm on his legs.'

'We shall envy you immensely,' said Laura Tinley to Arabella; who replied, 'I assure you that no decision has been come to.'

'Ah, you want to surprise us with cards on a sudden from Besworth!'

'That is not the surprise I have in store,' returned Arabella sedately.

'Then you have a surprise? Do tell me.'

'How true to her sex is the lady who seeks to turn "what it is" into "what it isn't!"' said Freshfield, trusty lieutenant.

'I think a little peeping makes surprises sweeter; I 'm weak enough to think that,' Lady Charlotte threw in.

'That is so true!' exclaimed Laura.

'Well; and a secret shared is a fact uncommonly well aired—that is also true. But, remember, you do not desire the surprise; you are a destroying force to it'; and Freshfield bowed.

'Curiosity!' sighed some one, relieving Freshfield from a sense of the guilt of heaviness.

'I am a Pandora,' Laura smilingly said.

'To whom?' Tracy Runningbrook's shout was heard.

'With champagne in the heads of the men, and classics in the heads of the women, we shall come to something,' remarked Lady Gosstre half to herself and Georgiana near her.

An observer of Mr. Pole might have seen that he was fretting at a restriction on his tongue. Occasionally he would sit forward erect in his chair, shake his coat-collar, frown, and sound a preparatory 'hem; but it ended in his rubbing his hair away on the back of his head. Mrs. Chump, who was herself perceiving new virtues in champagne with every glass, took the movements as indicative of a companion exploration of the spiritual resources of this vintage. She no longer called for it, but lifted a

majestic finger (a Siddons or tenth-Muse finger, as Freshfield named it) behind the row of heads; upon which champagne speedily bubbled in the glasses. Laughter at the performance had fairly set in. Arabella glanced nervously round for Mr. Pericles, who looked at his watch and spread the fingers of one hand open thrice—an act that telegraphed fifteen minutes. In fifteen minutes an opera troupe, with three famous chiefs and a renowned prima-donna, was to arrive. The fact was known solely to Arabella and Mr. Pericles. It was the Surprise of the evening. But within fifteen minutes, what might not happen, with heads going at champagne-pace?

Arabella proposed to Freshfield to rise. 'Don't the ladies go first?' the wit turned sensualist stammered; and incurred that worse than frown, a cold look of half-comprehension, which reduces indefinitely the proportions of the object gazed at. There were probably a dozen very young men in the room waiting to rise with their partners at a signal for dancing; and these could not be calculated upon to take an initiative, or follow one—as ladies, poor slaves! will do when the electric hostess rustles. The men present were non-conductors. Arabella knew that she could carry off the women, but such a proceeding would leave her father at the mercy of the wine; and, moreover, the probability was that Mrs. Chump would remain by him, and, sole in a company of males, explode her sex with ridicule, Brookfield in the bargain. So Arabella, under a prophetic sense of evil, waited; and this came of it. Mr. Pole patted Mrs. Chump's hand publicly. In spite of the steady hum of small-talk—in spite of Freshfield Sumner's circulation of a crisp anecdote—in spite of Lady Gosstre's kind effort to stop him by engaging him in conversation, Mr. Pole forced on for a speech. He said that he had not been the thing lately. It might be his legs, as his dear friend

Martha, on his right, insisted; but he had felt it in his head, though as strong as any man present.

'Harrk at 'm!' cried Mrs. Chump, letting her eyes roll fondly away from him into her glass.

'Business, my lady!' Mr. Pole resumed. 'Ah, you don't know what that is. We 've got to work hard to keep our heads up equal with you. We don't swim with corks. And my old friend, Ralph Tinley—he sells iron, and has got a mine. That 's simple. But, my God, ma'am, when a man has his eye on the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic, and the Baltic, and the Black Sea, and half-a-dozen colonies at once, he—you——'

'Well, it 's a precious big eye he 's got, Pole,' Mrs. Chump came to his relief.

'—he don't know whether he 's a ruined dog, or a man to hold up his head in any company.'

'Oh, Lord, Pole, if ye 're going to talk of beggary!' Mrs. Chump threw up her hands. 'My lady, I naver could abide the name of 't. I 'm a kind heart, ye know, but I can't bear a raggud friend. I hate 'm! He seems to give me a pinch.'

Having uttered this, it struck her that it was of a kind to convulse Mrs. Lupin, for whose seizures she could never accurately account; and looking round, she perceived, sure enough, that little forlorn body agitated, with a handkerchief to her mouth.

'As to Besworth,' Mr. Pole had continued, 'I might buy twenty Besworths. If—if the cut shows the right card. If——' Sweat started on his forehead, and he lifted his eyebrows, blinking. 'But none!' (he smote the table)—'none can say I haven't been a good father! I 've educated my girls to marry the best the land can show. I bought a house to marry them out of; it was their own idea.' He caught Arabella's eyes. 'I thought so, at all events; for why should I have paid the money

if I hadn't thought so ? when then—yes, that sum . . .' (was he choking !)—' saved me !—saved me ! '

A piteous desperate outburst marked the last words, that seemed to struggle from a tightened cord.

' Not that there 's anything the matter,' he resumed, with a very brisk wink. ' I 'm quite sound : heart 's sound, lungs sound, stomach regular. I can see, and smell, and hear. Sense of touch is rather lumpy at times, I know ; but the doctor says it 's nothing—nothing at all ; and I should be all right, if I didn't feel that I was always wearing a great leaden hat.'

' My gracious, Pole, if ye 're not talkin' pos'tuv nonsense ! ' exclaimed Mrs. Chump.

' Well, my dear Martha ' (Mr. Pole turned to her argumentatively), ' how do you account for my legs ? I feel it at top. I declare I 've felt the edge of the brim half a yard out. Now, my lady, a man in that state—sound and strong as the youngest—but I mean a vexed man—worried man—bothered man, he doesn't want a woman to look after him ;—I mean, he does—he does ! And why won't young girls—oh ! they might, they might—see that ? And when she 's no extra expense, but brings him—helps him to face—and no one has said the world 's a jolly world so often as I have. It 's jolly ! ' He groaned.

Lady Charlotte saw Wilfrid gazing at one spot on the table without a change of countenance. She murmured to him, ' What hits you hits me.'

Mr. Pole had recommenced, on the evident instigation of Laura Tinley, though Lady Gosstre and Freshfield Sumner had both sought to check the current. In Chump's lifetime, it appeared, he (Mr. Pole) had thought of Mrs. Chump with a respectful ardour ; and albeit she was no longer what she was when Chump brought her over, a blooming Irish girl—' her hair exactly as now,

the black curl half over the cheek, and a bright laugh, and a white neck, fat round arms, and——'

A shout of 'Oh, Pole! ye seem to be undressin' of me before them all,' diverted the neighbours of the Beauty.

'Who would not like such praise?' Laura Tinley, to keep alive the subject, laid herself open to Freshfield by a remark.

'At the same personal peril?' he inquired smoothly.

Mr. Pericles stood up, crying 'Enfin!' as the doors were flung open, and a great Signora of operatic fame entered the hall, supported on one side by a charming gentleman (a tenore), who shared her fame and more with her. In the rear were two working baritones; and behind them, outside, Italian heads might be discerned.

The names of the Queen of Song and Prince of Singers flew round the room; and Laura uttered words of real gratitude for the delightful surprise to Arabella, as the latter turned from her welcome of them. 'She is exactly like Emilia—young,' was uttered. The thought went with a pang through Wilfrid's breast. When the Signora was asked if she would sup or take champagne, and she replied that she would sup by-and-by, and drink porter now, the likeness to Emilia was established among the Poles.

Meantime the unhappy Braintop received an indication that he must depart. As he left the hall he brushed past the chief-clerk of his office, who soon appeared bowing and elbowing among the guests. 'What a substitute for me!' thought Braintop bitterly; and in the belief that this old clerk would certainly go back that night, and might undertake his commission, he lingered near the band on the verge of the lawn. A touch at his elbow startled him. In the half-light he discerned Emilia. 'Don't say you have seen me,' were her first words.

But when he gave her the letter, she drew him aside, and read it by the aid of lighted matches held in Braintop's hat—drawing in her fervent breath to a 'Yes! yes!' at the close, while she pressed the letter to her throat. Presently the singing began in an upper room, that had shortly before flashed with sudden light. Braintop entreated Emilia to go in, and then rejoiced that she had refused. They stood in a clear night-air, under a yellowing crescent, listening to the voice of an imperial woman. Impressed as he was, Braintop had, nevertheless, leisure to look out of his vinous mist and notice, with some misgiving, a parading light at a certain distance—apparently the light of cigarettes being freshly kindled. He was too much elated to feel alarm: but 'If her father were to catch me again,' he thought. And with Emilia on his arm!

Mr. Pole's chief-clerk had brought discomposing news. He was received with an outburst of 'No business, Payne; I won't have business!'

Turning to Mr. Pericles, the old clerk said: 'I came rather for you, sir, not expecting to find Mr. Pole.' He was told by Mr. Pericles to speak what he had to say: and then the guests, who had fallen slightly back, heard a cavernous murmur; and some, whose eyes were on Mr. Pole, observed a sharp conflict of white and red in his face.

'There, there, there, there!' went Mr. Pole. ''Hem, Pericles!' His handkerchief was drawn out; and he became engaged, as it were, in wiping a moisture from the palm of his hand. 'Pericles, have you got pluck now? Eh?'

Mr. Pericles had leaned down his ear for the whole of the news.

'Ten sossand,' he said, smoothing his wristbands, and then inserting his thumbs into the pits of his waistcoat.

'Also a chance of forty. Let us not lose time for ze music.'

He walked away.

'I don't believe in that d—d coolness, ma'am,' said Mr. Pole, wheeling round on Freshfield Sumner. 'It 's put on. That fellow wears a mask; he 's one of those confounded humbugs who wear a mask. Ten—forty! and all for a shrug; it 's not human. I tell you, he does that just out of a sort of jealousy to rival me as an Englishman. Because I 'm cool, he must be. Do you think a mother doesn't feel the loss of her children?'

'I fear that I must grow petticoats before I can answer purely feminine questions,' said Freshfield.

'Of course—of course,' assented Mr. Pole; 'and a man feels like a mother to his money. For the moment, he does—for the moment. What were those fellows—Spartans—women who cut off their breasts——?'

Freshfield suggested, 'Amazons.'

'No; they were women,' Mr. Pole corrected him; 'and if anything hurt them, they never cried out. That 's what—ha!—our friend Pericles is trying at. He 's a fool. He won't sleep to-night. He 'll lie till he gets cold in the feet, and then tuck them up like a Dutch doll, and perspire cold till his heart gives a bound, and he 'll jump up and think his last hour 's come. Wind on the stomach, do ye call it? I say it 's wearing a mask!'

The bird's-eyes of the little merchant shot decisive meaning.

Two young ladies had run from his neighbourhood, making as if to lift hands to ears. The sight of them brought Mrs. Chump to his side. 'Pole! Pole!' she said, 'is there annything wrong?'

'Wrong, Martha?' He bent to her, attempting Irish—'Arrah, now! and mustn't all be right if *you* 're here?'

She smote his cheek fondly. 'Ye 're not a bit of an Irishman, ye deer little fella.'

'Come along and dance,' cried he imperiously.

'A pretty spectacle—two fandangoes, when there 's singing, ye silly!' Mrs. Chump led him upstairs, chafing one of his hands, and remarking loudly on the wonder it was to see his knees constantly 'give' as he walked.

On the dark lawn, pressing Wilfrid's written words for fiery nourishment to her heart, Emilia listened to the singing.

'Why do people make a noise, and not be satisfied to *feel*?' she said angrily to Braintop, as a great clapping of hands followed a divine aria. Her ideas on this point would have been different in the room.

By degrees a tender delirium took hold of her senses; and then a subtle emotion—which was partly prompted by dim rivalry with the voice that seemed to be speaking so richly to the man she loved—set her bosom rising and falling. She translated it to herself thus: 'What a joy it will be to him to hear *me* now!' And in a pause she sang clear out—

'*Prima d'Italia amica*';

and hung on the last note, to be sure that she would be heard by him.

Braintop saw the cigarette dash into sparks on the grass. At the same moment a snarl of critical vituperation told Emilia that she had offended taste and her father. He shouted her name, and, striding up to her, stumbled over Braintop, whom he caught with one hand, while the other fell firmly on Emilia.

'"Amicà—amicà-à-à,"' he burlesqued her stress of the luckless note—lowing it at her, and telling her in triumphant Italian that she was found at last. Braintop, after a short struggle and an effort at speech, which was

loosely shaken in his mouth, heard that he stood a prisoner. 'Eh! you have not lost your cheeks,' insulted his better acquaintance with English slang. Alternately in this queer tongue and in Italian the pair of victims were addressed.

Emilia knew her father's temper. He had a habit of dallying with an evil passion till it boiled over and possessed him. Believing Braintop to be in danger of harm, she beckoned to some of the faces crowding the windows; but the movement was not seen, as none of the circumstances were at all understood. Wilfrid, however, knew well who had sung those three bars, concerning which the 'Prima donna' questioned Mr. Pericles, and would not be put off by hearing that it was a startled jackdaw, or an owl, or an old nightingale. The Greek rubbed his hands. 'Now to recommence,' he said; 'and we shall not notice a jackdaw again.' His eye went sideways watchfully at Wilfrid. 'You like zat piece of opera?'

'Immensely,' said Wilfrid, half bowing to the Signora—to whom, as to Majesty, Mr. Pericles introduced him, and fixed him.

'Now! to seats!'

Mr. Pericles' mandate was being obeyed, when a cry of 'Wilfrid!' from Emilia below, raised a flutter.

Mr. Pole had been dozing in his chair. He rose at the cry, looking hard, with a mechanical jerk of the neck, at two or three successive faces, and calling, 'Somebody—somebody' to take his outstretched hand trembling in a paroxysm of nervous terror.

Hearing his son's name again, but more faintly, he raised his voice for Martha. 'Don't let that girl come near me! I—I can't get on with foreign girls.'

His eyes went among the curious faces surrounding him. 'Wilfrid!' he shouted. To the second summons,

'Sir' was replied, in the silence. Neither saw the other as they spoke.

'Are you going out to her, Wilfrid?'

'Some one called me, sir.'

'He 's got the cunning of hell,' said Mr. Pole, baffled by his own agitation.

'Oh! don't talk o' that place,' moaned Mrs. Chump.

'Stop!' cried the old man. 'Are you going? Stop you sha'n't do mischief. I mean—there—stop! Don't go. You 're not to go. I say you 're not to go out.'

Emphasis and gesticulations gave their weight to the plain words.

But rage at the upset of all sentiment and dignity that day made Wilfrid reckless, and he now felt his love to be all he had. He heard his Emilia being dragged away to misery—perhaps to be sold to shame. Maddened, he was incapable of understanding his father's state, or caring for what the world thought. His sisters gathered near him, but were voiceless.

'Is he gone?' Mr. Pole burst forward. 'You 're gone, sir? Wilfrid, have you gone to that girl? I ask you whether . . . (there 's one shot at my heart,' he added in a swift undertone to one of the heads near him, while he caught at his breast with both hands). 'Wilfrid, will you stay here?'

'For God's sake, go to him, Wilfrid,' murmured Adela. 'I can't.'

'Because, if you do—if you don't—I mean, if you go . . .' The old man gasped in the same undertone. 'Now I have got it in my throat.'

A quick physical fear caught hold of him. In a moment his voice changed to entreaty. 'I beg you won't go, my dear boy. Wilfrid, I tell you, don't go. Because, you wouldn't act like a d—d ——. I 'm not angry; but it is like acting like a ——. Here 's company, Wilfrid; come

to me, my boy ; do come here. You mayn't ha—have your poor old father long, now he 's got you u—up in the world. I mean accidents, for I 'm sound enough ; only a little nervous from brain——. Is he gone ? '

Wilfrid was then leaving the room.

Lady Gosstre had been speaking to Mr. Powys. She was about to say a word to Lady Charlotte, when the latter walked to the doorway, and, in a manner that smote his heart with a spasm of gratitude, said : ' Don't heed these people. He will bring on a fit if you don't stop. His nerves are out, and the wine they have given him . . . Go to him : I will go to Emilia, and do as much for her as you could.'

Wilfrid reached his father in time to see him stagger back into the arms of Mrs. Chump, whose supplication was for the female stimulant known as ' something.'

CHAPTER XXXIII

DEFEAT AND FLIGHT OF MRS. CHUMP

On reaching home that night, Arabella surprised herself thinking, in the midst of her anguish : ' Whatever is said of us, it cannot be said that there is a house where the servants have been better cared for.' And this reflection continued to burn with an astonishing brilliancy through all the revolutions of a mind contemplating the dread of a fallen fortune, the fact of a public exposure, and what was to her an ambition destroyed. Adela had no such thoughts. ' I have been walking on a plank,' she gasped from time to time, as she gave startled glances into the abyss of poverty, and hurried to her bedchamber—a faint whisper of self-condemnation in her ears at the ' I '

being foremost. The sisters were too proud to touch upon one another's misery in complaints, or admit it to be common by holding debate on it. They had not once let their eyes meet at Besworth, as the Tinleys wonderingly noticed. They said good-night to their papa, who was well enough to reply, adding peremptorily, 'Downstairs at half-past eight,'—an intimation that he would be at the breakfast-table, and read prayers as usual. Inexperienced in nervous disease, they were now filled with the idea that he was possibly acting—a notion that had never been kindled in them before; or, otherwise, how came these rapid, almost instantaneous, recoveries?

Cornelia alone sounded near the keynote. Since the night that she had met him in the passage, and the morning when Mrs. Chump had raised the hubbub about her loss, Cornelia's thoughts had been troubled by some haunting spectral relationship with money. It had helped to make her reckless in granting interviews to Purcell Barrett. 'If we are poor, I am free'; and that she might then give herself to whomsoever she pleased, was her logical deduction. The exposure at Besworth, and the partial confirmation of her suspicions, were not without their secret comfort to her. In the carriage, coming home, Wilfrid had touched her hand by chance, and pressed it with good heart. She went to the library, imagining that if he wished to see her he would appear, and by exposing his own weakness learn to excuse hers. She was right in her guess; Wilfrid came. He came sauntering into the room with 'Ah! you here?' Cornelia consented to play into his hypocrisy. 'Yes, I generally think better here,' she replied.

'And what has this pretty head got to do with thinking?'

'Not much, I suppose, my lord,' she said, affecting

nobly to acknowledge the weakness of the female creature.

Wilfrid kissed her with an unaccustomed fervour. This delicate mumming was to his taste. It was yet more so when she spoke playfully to him of his going soon to be a married man. He could answer to that in a smiling negative, playing round the question, until she perceived that he really desired to have his feeling for the odd dark girl who had recently shot across their horizon touched, if only it were led to by the muffled ways of innuendo. As a dog, that cannot ask you verbally to scratch his head, but wishes it, will again and again thrust his muzzle into your hand, petitioning mutely that affection may divine him, so :—But we deal with a sentimentalist, and the simile is too gross to be exact. For no sooner was Wilfrid's *head scratched*, than the operation struck him as humiliating ; in other words, the moment he felt his sister's fingers in the ticklish part, he flew to another theme, then returned, and so backward and forward—mystifying her not slightly, and making her think, 'Then he has no heart.' She by no means intended to encourage love for Emilia, but she hoped, for his sake, that the sentiment he had indulged was sincere. By-and-by he said, that though he had no particular affection for Lady Charlotte, he should probably marry her.

'Without loving her, Wilfrid ? It is unfair to her ; it is unfair to yourself.'

Wilfrid understood perfectly who it was for whom she pleaded thus vehemently. He let her continue : and when she had dwelt on the horrors of marriages without love, and the supreme duty of espousing one who has our 'heart's loyalty,' he said, 'You may be right. A man must not play with a girl. He must consider that he owes a duty to one who is more dependent';—

implying that a woman's duty was distinct and different in such a case.

Cornelia could not rise and plead for her sex. Had she pushed forth the 'woman,' she must have stood for her.

This is the game of Fine Shades and Nice Feelings, under whose empire you see this family, and from which they are to emerge considerably shorn, but purified—examples of one present passage of our civilization.

'At least, dear, if' (Cornelia desperately breathed the name)—'if Emilia were forced to give her hand . . . loving . . . you . . . we should be right in pitying her?'

The snare was almost too palpable. Wilfrid fell into it, from the simple passion that the name inspired; and now his hand tightened. 'Poor child!' he moaned.

She praised his kind heart: 'You cannot be unjust and harsh, I know that. You could not see her—me—any of us miserable. Women feel, dear. Ah! I need not tell you that. Their tears are not the witnesses. When they do not weep, but the hot drops stream inwardly;—and, oh! Wilfrid, let this never happen to me. I shall not disgrace you, because I intend to see you happy with . . . with her, whoever she is; and I would leave you happy. But I should not survive it. I can look on Death. A marriage without love is dishonour.'

Sentiment enjoys its splendid moods. Wilfrid having had the figure of his beloved given to him under nuptial benediction, cloaked, even as he wished it to be, could afford now to commiserate his sister, and he admired her at the same time. 'I 'll take care you are not made a sacrifice of when the event is fixed,' he said—as if it had never been in contemplation.

'Oh! I have not known happiness for years, till this hour,' Cornelia whispered to him bashfully; and set him

wondering why she should be happy when she had nothing but his sanction to *reject* a man.

On the other hand, her problem was to gain lost ground by letting him know that, of the pair, it was not she who would marry beneath her station. She tried it mentally in various ways. In the end she thought it best to give him this positive assurance. 'No,' he rejoined, 'a woman never should.' There was no admission of equality to be got out of him, so she kissed him. Of their father's health a few words were said—of Emilia nothing further. She saw that Wilfrid's mind was resolved upon some part to play, but shrank from asking his confidence, lest facts should be laid bare.

At the breakfast-table Mr. Pole was a little late. He wore some of his false air of briskness on a hazy face, and read prayers—drawing breath between each sentence, and rubbing his forehead; but the work was done by a man in ordinary health, if you chose to think so, as Mrs. Chump did. She made favourable remarks on his appearance, begging the ladies to corroborate her. They were silent.

'Now take a chop, Pole, and show your appetite,' she said. '"A Chump-chop, my love?" my little man used to invite me of a mornin'; and that was the onnly joke he had, so it 's worth rememberin'.'

A chop was placed before Mr. Pole. He turned it in his plate, and wonderingly called to mind that he had once enjoyed chops. At a loss to account for the distressing change, he exclaimed to himself, 'Chump! I wish the woman wouldn't thrust her husband between one's teeth. An egg!'

The chop was displaced for an egg, which he tapped until Mrs. Chump cried out, 'Oh! if ye 're not like a postman, Pole; and d' ye think ye've got a letter for a chick inside there?'

This allusion scared Mr. Pole from the egg. He quitted the table, muttering, 'Business! business!' and went to the library.

When he was gone Mrs. Chump gave a cry to know where Braintop was, but, forgetting him immediately, turned to the ladies and ejaculated, 'Broth'm. It 's just brothin' he wants. Broth, I say, for anny man that won't eat his chop or his egg. And, my dears, now, what do ye say to me for bringing him home to ye? I expect to be thanked, I do; and then we 'll broth Pole together, till he 's lusty as a prize-ox, and capers like a monkey.'

Wretched woman! that could not see the ruin she had inflicted—that could not imagine how her bitter breath cut against those sensitive skins! During a short pause little Mrs. Lupin tottered to the door, and shot through it, in a paroxysm.

Then Wilfrid's voice was heard. He leaned against a corner of the window, and spoke without directly looking at Mrs. Chump; so that she was some time in getting to understand the preliminary, 'Madam, you must leave this house.' But presently her chin dropped; and after feeble efforts to interpose an exclamation, she sat quiet —overcome by the deliberate gravity of his manner, and motioning despairingly with her head, to relieve the swarm of unborn figureless ideas suggested by his passing speech. The ladies were ranged like tribunal shapes. It could not be said of souls so afflicted that they felt pleasure in the scene; but to assist in the administration of a rigorous justice is sweet to them that are smarting. They scarcely approved his naked statement of things when he came to Mrs. Chump's particular aspiration in the household—viz., to take a station and the dignity of their name. The effect he produced satisfied them that the measure was correct. Her back gave a sharp bend, as

if an eternal support had snapped. 'Oh! ye hit hard,' she moaned.

'I tell you kindly that we (who, you will acknowledge, must count for something here) do not sanction any change that revolutionizes our domestic relations,' said Wilfrid; while Mrs. Chump heaved and rolled on the swell of the big words like an overladen boat. 'You have only to understand so much, and this—that if we resist it, as we do, you, by continuing to contemplate it, are provoking a contest which will probably injure neither you nor me, but will be death to *him* in his present condition.'

Mrs. Chump was heard to mumble that she alone knew the secret of restoring him to health, and that he was rendered peaky and puky only by people supposing him so.

'An astonishin' thing!' she burst out. 'If I kiss 'm and say "Poor Pole!" he 's poor Pole on the spot. And, if onnly I——'

But Wilfrid's stern voice flowed over her. 'Listen, madam, and let this be finished between us. You know well that when a man has children, he may wish to call another woman wife—a woman not their mother; but the main question is, will his children consent to let her take that place? We are of one mind, and will allow no one—no one—to assume that position. And now, there 's an end. We 'll talk like friends. I have only spoken in that tone that you might clearly comprehend me on an important point. I know you entertain a true regard for my father, and it is that belief which makes me——'

'Friends!' cried Mrs. Chump, getting courage from the savour of cajolery in these words. 'Friends! Oh, ye fox! ye fox!'

And now commenced a curious duett. Wilfrid merely

wished to terminate his sentence ; Mrs. Chump wantonly sought to prevent him. Each was burdened with serious matter ; but they might have struck hands here, had not this petty accidental opposition interposed.

'——Makes me feel confident . . .' Wilfrid resumed.

'And Pole's promus, Mr. Wilfrud ; ye 're forgettin' that.'

'——Confident, ma'am . . .'

'He was the firrst to be soft.'

'I say, ma'am, for *his* sake——'

'An' it 's *for* his sake. And weak as he is on 's legs, poor fella ; which marr'ge 'll cure, bein' a certain rem'dy.'

'Mrs. Chump ! I beg you to listen.'

'Mr. Wilfrud ! and I can see too, and it 's three weeks and ye kissed little Belloni in the passage, outside this vary door, and out in the garden.'

The blow was entirely unexpected, and took Wilfrid's breath, so that he was not ready for his turn in this singular piece of harmony.

'Ye did ! ' Mrs. Chump rejoiced to behold how her chance spark kindled flame in his cheeks. 'It 's pos'tuv ye did. And ye 're the best blusher of the two, my dear ; and no shame to ye, though it is a garl's business. That little Belloni takes to 't like milk ; but you——'

Wilfrid strode up to her, saying imperiously, 'I tell you to listen ! '

She succumbed at once to a show of physical ascendancy, murmuring, 'It 's sure he was seen kissin' of her twice, and mayhap more ; and hearty smacks of the lips, too—likin' it.'

The ladies rewarded Wilfrid for his service to their cause by absolutely hearing nothing—a feat women can be capable of.

Wilfrid, however, was angered by the absurdity of the

charge and the scene, and also by the profane touch on Emilia's name.

'I must tell you, ma'am, that for my father's sake I must desire you to quit this—— you will see the advisability of quitting this house for a time.'

'Pole's promus! Pole's promus!' Mrs. Chump wailed again.

'Will you give me your assurance now that you will go, to be our guest again subsequently?'

'In writin' and in words, Mr. Wilfrud!'

'Answer me, ma'am.'

'I will, Mr. Wilfrud; and Mr. Braintop 's a witness, knowin' the nature of an oath. There naver was a more sacrud promus. Says Pole, "Martha——"'

Wilfrid changed his tactics. Sitting down by her side, he said: 'I am sure you have an affection for my father.'

'I 'm the most lovin' woman, my dear! If it wasn't for my vartue I don't know what 'd become o' me. Ye could ask Chump, if he wasn't in his grave, poor fella! I 'll be cryin' like a squeezed orr'nge presently. What with Chump and Pole, two 's too many for a melanch'ly woman.'

'You *have* an affection for my father I know, ma'am. Now, see! he 's ill. If you press him to do what we certainly resist, you endanger his life.'

Mrs. Chump started back from the man who bewildered her brain without stifling her sense of injustice. She knew that there was another way of putting the case, whereby she was not stuck in the criminal box; but the knowledge groped about blindly, and finding herself there, Mrs. Chump lost all idea of a counter-accusation, and resorted to wriggling and cajolery. 'Ah! ye look sweeter when ye 're kissin' us, Mr. Wilfrud; and I wonder where the little Belloni has got to!'

'Tell me, that there may be no misunderstanding.' Wilfrid again tried to fix her.

'A rosy rosy fresh bit of a mouth she 's got! and pouts ut!'

Wilfrid took her hand. 'Answer me.'

''Deed, and I 'm modust, Mr. Wilfrud.'

'You do him the honour to be very fond of him. I am to believe that? Then you must consent to leave us at the end of a week. You abandon any idea of an impossible ceremony, and of us you make friends and not enemies.'

At the concluding word, Mrs. Chump was no longer sustained by her excursive fancy. She broke down, and wrung her hands, crying, 'En'mies! Pole's children my en'mies! Oh, Lord! that I should live to hear ut! and Pole, that knew me a bride first blushin'!'

She wailed and wept so that the ladies exchanged compassionate looks, and Arabella rose to press her hand and diminish her distress. Wilfrid saw that his work would be undone in a moment, and waved her to her seat. The action was perceived by Mrs. Chump.

'Oh, Mr. Wilfrud! my dear! and a soldier! and you that was my favourut! If half my 'ffection for Pole wasn't the seein' of you so big and handsome! And all my ideas to get ye marrud, avery one so snug in a corner, with a neat little lawful ring on your fingers! And you that go to keep me a lone woman, frightened of the darrk! I 'm an awful coward, that 's the truth. And ye know that marr'ge is a holy thing! and it 's such a beaut'ful cer'mony! Oh, Mr. Wilfrud!—Lieuten't y' are! and I 'd have bought ye a captain, and made the hearts o' your sisters jump with bonnuts and gowns and jools. Oh, Pole! Pole! why did you keep me so short o' cash? It 's been the roon of me! What did I care for your brooches and your gifts? I wanted the goodwill of your daughters, sir—your son, Pole!'

Mrs. Chump stopped her flow of tears. 'Dear hearts!' she addressed her silent judges, in mysterious guttural tones, 'is it becas ye think there 's a bit of a fear of . . . ?'

The ladies repressed a violent inclination to huddle together, like cattle from the blowing East.

'I assure ye, 'taint poss'ble,' pursued Mrs. Chump. 'Why do I 'gree to marry Pole? Just this, now. We sit chirpin' and chatterin' of times that 's gone, and live twice over, Pole and myself; and I 'm used to 'm; and I was soft to 'm when he was a merry buck, and you cradle lumber—in ideas, mind! for my vartue was always un'mpeach'ble. That 's just the reason. So, come, and let 's all be friends, with money in our pockuts; ye 'll find me as much of a garl as anny of ye. And, there! my weak time 's after my Porrt, my dears. So, now ye know when I can't be refusin' a thing to ye. Are we friends?—say! are we?'

Even if the ladies had been disposed to pardon her vulgarity, they could not by any effort summon a charitable sentiment toward one of their sex who degraded it by a public petition for a husband. This was not to be excused; and, moreover, they entertained the sentimentalist's abhorrence of the second marriage of a woman; regarding the act as simply execrable; being treason to the ideal of the sex—treason to Woman's purity—treason to the mysterious sentiment which places Woman so high, that when a woman slips there is no help for it but she must be smashed.

Seeing that each looked as implacable as the other, Mrs. Chump called plaintively, 'Arr'bella!'

The lady spoke:

'We are willing to be your friends, Mrs. Chump, and we request that you will consider us in that light. We simply do not consent to give you a name . . .'

'But, we 'll do without the name, my dear,' interposed

Mrs. Chump. 'Ye 'll call me plain Martha, which is almost mother, and not a bit of 't. There—Cornelia, my love! what do ye say?'

'I can only reiterate my sister's words, which demand no elucidation,' replied Cornelia.

The forlorn woman turned her lap towards the youngest.

'Ad'la! ye sweet little cajoler! And don't use great cartwheels o' words that leave a body crushed.'

Adela was suffering from a tendency to levity, which she knew to be unbefitting the occasion, and likely to defeat its significance. She said: 'I am sure, Mrs. Chump, we are very much attached to you *as* Mrs. Chump; but after a certain period of life, marriage does make people ridiculous, and, as much for your sake as our own, we would advise you to discard a notion that cannot benefit anybody. Believe in our attachment; and we shall see you here now and then, and correspond with you when you are away. And . . .'

'Oh, ye puss! such an eel as y' are!' Mrs. Chump cried out. 'What are ye doin' but sugarin' the same dose, Miss! Be qui't! It 's a traitor that makes what 's nasty taste agree'ble. D' ye think my stomach 's a fool? Ye may wheedle the mouth, but not the stomach.'

At this offence there fell a dead silence. Wilfrid gazed down on them all indifferently, waiting for the moment to strike a final blow.

When she had grasped the fact that Pity did not sit in the assembly, Mrs. Chump rose.

'Oh! if I haven't been sitting among three owls and a raven,' she exclaimed. Then she fussed at her gown. 'I wish ye good-day, young ladus, and mayhap ye 'd like to be interduced to No. 2 yourselves, some fine mornin'? Prov'dence can wait. There 's a patient

hen on the eggs of all of ye! I wouldn't marry Pole now—not if he was to fall flat and howl for me. Mr. Wilfrud, I wish ye good-bye. Ye 've done your work. I 'll be out of this house in half-an-hour.'

This was not quite what Wilfrid had meant to effect. He proposed to her that she should come to the yacht, and indeed leave Brookfield to go on board. But Mrs. Chump was in that frame of mind when, shamefully wounded by others, we find our comfort in wilfully wounding ourselves. 'No,' she said (betraying a meagre mollification at every offer), 'I 'll not stop. I won't go to the yacht—unless I think better of ut. But I won't stop. Ye 've hurrt me, and I 'll say good-bye. I hope ye 'll none of ye be widows. It 's a crool thing. And when ye 've got no children of your own, and feel all your inside risin' to another person's, and they hate ye—*hate* ye! Oh! Oh!——There, Mr. Wilfrud, ye needn't touch me elbow. Oh, dear! look at me in the glass! and my hair! Annybody 'd swear I 'd been drinkin'. I won't let Pole look at me. That 'd cure 'm. And he must let me have money, because I don't care for 'cumulations. Not now, when there 's no young—no garls and a precious boy, who 'd say, when I 'm gone, "Bless her!" Oh!—"Poor thing! Bless——" Oh! Augh!' A note of Sorrow's own was fetched; and the next instant, with a figure of dignity, the afflicted woman observed: 'There 's seven bottles of my Porrt, and there 's eleven of champagne, and some comut clar't; I shall write where ut 's to be sent. And, if ye please, look to the packing; for bits o' glass and a red stain 's not like your precious hope when you 're undoin' a hamper. And that 's just myself now, and I 'm a broken woman; but naver mind, nobody!'

A very formal and stiff 'Good-bye,' succeeding a wheezy lamentation, concluded the speech. Casting a

look at the glass, Mrs. Chump retired, with her fingers on the ornamental piece of hair.

The door having closed on her, Wilfrid said to his sisters : ' I want one of you to come with me to town immediately. Decide which will go.'

His eyes questioned Cornelia. Hers were dropped.

' I have work to do,' pleaded Adela.

' An appointment ? You will break it.'

' No, dear, not——'

' Not exactly an appointment. Then there 's nothing to break. Put on your bonnet.'

Adela slipped from the room in a spirit of miserable obedience.

' I could not possibly leave papa,' said Arabella, and Wilfrid nodded his head. His sisters knew quite well what was his business in town, but they felt that they were at his mercy, and dared not remonstrate. Cornelia ventured to say, ' I think she should not come back to us till papa is in a better state.'

' Perhaps not,' replied Wilfrid, careless how much he betrayed by his apprehension of the person indicated.

The two returned late that night, and were met by Arabella at the gate.

' Papa has been—don't be alarmed,' she began. ' He is better now. But when he heard that she was not in the house, the blood left his hands and feet. I have had to use a falsehood. I said, " She left word that she was coming back to-night or to-morrow." Then he became simply angry. Who could have believed that the sight of him so would ever have rejoiced me ! '

Adela, worn with fatigue, sobbed, ' Oh ! Oh ! '

' By the way, Sir Twickenham called, and wished to see *you*,' said Arabella curiously.

' Oh ! so weary ! ' the fair girl ejaculated, half-dreaming that she saw herself as she threw back her head and

gazed at stars and clouds. 'We met Captain Gambier in town.' Here she pinched Arabella's arm.

The latter said, 'Where?'

'In a miserable street, where he looked like a peacock in a quagmire.'

Arabella entreated Wilfrid to be careful in his management of their father. 'Pray, do not thwart him. He has been anxious to know where you have gone. He—he thinks you have conducted Mrs. Chump, and will bring her back. I did not say it—I merely let him think so.'

She added presently, 'He has spoken of money.'

'Yes?' went Adela, in a low breath.

'Cornelia imagines that—that we—he is perhaps in—in want of it. Merchants are, sometimes.'

'Did Sir Twickenham say he would call to-morrow?' asked Adela.

'He said that most probably he would.'

Wilfrid had been silent. As he entered the house, Mr. Pole's bedroom-bell rang, and word came that he was to go to his father. As soon as the sisters were alone, Adela groaned: 'We have been hunting that girl all day in vile neighbourhoods. Wilfrid has not spoken more than a dozen sentences. I have had to dine on buns and hideous soup. I am half-dead with the smell of cabs. Oh! if ever I am poor it will kill me. That damp hay and close musty life are too intolerable! Yes! You see I care for what I eat. I seem to be growing an animal. And Wilfrid is going to drag me over the same course to-morrow, if you don't prevent him. I would not mind, only it is *absolutely* necessary that I should see Sir Twickenham.'

She gave a reason why, which appeared to Arabella so cogent that she said at once: 'If Cornelia does not take your place I will.'

The kiss of thanks given by Adela was accompanied by a request for tea. Arabella regretted that she had sent the servants to bed.

'To bed!' cried her sister. 'But they are the masters, not we! Really, if life were a round of sensual pleasure, I think our servants might congratulate themselves.'

Arabella affected to show that they had their troubles; but her statement made it clear that the servants of Brookfield were peculiarly favoured servants, as it was their mistress's pride to make them. Eventually Adela consented to drink some sparkling light wine; and being thirsty she drank eagerly, and her tongue was loosed, insomuch that she talked of things as one who had never been a blessed inhabitant of the kingdom of Fine Shades. She spoke of 'Cornelia's chances'; of 'Wilfrid's headstrong infatuation—or worse'; and of 'Papa's position,' remarking that she could both laugh and cry.

Arabella, glad to see her refreshed, was pained by her rampant tone; and when Adela, who had fallen into one of her reflective 'long-shot' moods, chanced to say, 'What a number of different beings there are in the world!' her reply was, 'I was just then thinking we are all less unlike than we suppose.'

'Oh, my goodness!' cried Adela. 'What! am *I* at all —at *all*—in the remotest degree—like that creature we have got rid of?'

The negative was not decisively enunciated or immediate; that is, it did not come with the vehemence and volume that could alone have satisfied Adela's expectation.

The 'We are all of one family' was an offensive truism, of which Adela might justly complain.

That night the ladies received their orders from Wilfrid: —they were to express no alarm before their father as to the state of his health, or to treat him ostensibly as an

invalid; they were to marvel publicly at Mrs. Chump's continued absence, and a letter requesting her to return was to be written. At the sign of an expostulation, Wilfrid smote them down by saying that the old man's life hung on a thread, and it was for them to cut it or not.

CHAPTER XXXIV

INDICATES THE DEGRADATION OF BROOKFIELD, TOGETHER WITH CERTAIN PROCEEDINGS OF THE YACHT

Lady Charlotte was too late for Emilia, when she went forth to her to speak for Wilfrid. She found the youth Braintop resting heavily against a tree, muttering to himself that he had no notion where he was, as an excuse for his stationary posture, while the person he presumed he should have detained was being borne away. Near him a scrap of paper lay on the ground, struck out of darkness by long slips of light from the upper windows. Thinking this might be something purposely dropped, she took possession of it; but a glance subsequently showed her that the writing was too fervid for a female hand. 'Or does the girl write in that way?' she thought. She soon decided that it was Wilfrid who had undone her work in the line of thirsty love-speech. 'How can a little fool read them and not believe any lie that he may tell!' she cried to herself. She chose to say contemptuously: 'It 's like a child proclaiming he is hungry.' That it was couched in bad taste she positively conceived—taking the paper up again and again to correct her memory. The termination, 'Your lover,' appeared to her, if not laughable, revolting. She was uncertain in her sentiments at this point.

Was it amusing ? or simply execrable ? Some charity for the unhappy document Lady Charlotte found when she could say : ' I suppose this is the general run of the kind of thing.' Was it ? she reflected ; and drank at the words again. ' No,' she came to think ; ' men don't commonly write as he does, whoever wrote this.' She had no doubt that it was Wilfrid. By fits her wrath was directed against him. ' It 's villany,' she said. But more and more frequently a crouching abject longing to call the words her own—to have them poured into her heart and brain—desire for the intoxication of the naked speech of love usurped her spirit of pride, until she read with envious tears, half loathing herself, but fascinated and subdued : ' *Mine ! my angel ! You will see me to-morrow.*—YOUR LOVER.'

Of jealousy she felt very little—her chief thought coming like a wave over her : ' Here is a man that can love ! '

She was a woman of chaste blood, which spoke to her as shyly as a girl's, now that it was in tumult : so indeed that, pressing her heart, she thought youth to have come back, and feasted on the exultation we have when, at an odd hour, we fancy we have cheated time. The sensation of youth and strength seemed to set a seal of lawfulness and naturalness, hitherto wanting, on her feeling for Wilfrid. ' I can help him,' she thought. ' I know where he fails, and what he can do. I can give him position, and be worth as much as any woman can be to a man.' Thus she justified the direction taken by the new force in her.

Two days later Wilfrid received a letter from Lady Charlotte, saying that she, with a chaperon, had started to join her brother at the yacht-station, according to appointment. Amazed and utterly discomfited, he looked about for an escape ; but his father, whose plea

of sickness had kept him from pursuing Emilia, petulantly insisted that he should go down to Lady Charlotte. Adela was ready to go. There were numbers either going or now on the spot, and the net was around him. Cornelia held back, declaring that her place was by her father's side. Fine Shades were still too dominant at Brookfield for any one to tell her why she stayed.

With anguish so deep that he could not act indifference, Wilfrid went on his miserable expedition—first setting a watch over Mr. Pericles, the which, in connection with the electric telegraph, was to enable him to join that gentleman speedily, whithersoever he might journey. He was not one to be deceived by the Greek's mask in running down daily to Brookfield. A manœuvre like that was poor ; and besides, he had seen the sallow eyes give a twinkle more than once.

Now, on the Besworth night, Georgiana Ford had studied her brother Merthyr's face when Emilia's voice called for Wilfrid. Her heart was touched ; and, in the midst of some little invidious wonder at the power of a girl to throw her attraction upon such a man, she thought, as she hoped, that probably it was due to the girl's Italian blood. Merthyr was not unwilling to speak of her, and say what he feared and desired for Emilia's sake ; and Georgiana read, by this mark of confidence, how sincerely she was loved and trusted by him. 'One never can have more than half of a man's heart,' she thought—adding, 'It 's our duty to deserve that, nevertheless.'

She was mystified. Say that Merthyr loved a girl, whom he certainly distinguished with some visible affection, what sort of man must he be that was preferred to Merthyr ? And this set Georgiana at work thinking of Wilfrid. 'He has at times the air of a student. He is one who trusts his own light too exclusively. Is he godless ? ' She concluded : 'He is a soldier, and an

officer with brains—a good class.' Rare also. Altogether, though Emilia did not elevate herself in this lady's mind by choosing Wilfrid when she might have had Merthyr, the rivalry of the two men helped to dignify the one of whom she thought least. Might she have had Merthyr ? Georgiana would not believe it—that is to say, she shut the doors and shot the bolts, but the knocking outside went on.

Her brother had told her the whole circumstances of Emilia's life and position. When he said, 'Do what you can for her,' she knew that it was not the common empty phrase. Young as she was, simple in habits, clear in mind, open in all practices of daily life, she was no sooner brought into an active course than astuteness and impetuosity combined wonderfully in her. She did not tell Merthyr that she had done anything to discover Emilia, and only betrayed that she was moving at all in a little conversation they had about a meeting at the house of his friend Marini, an Italian exile.

'Possibly Belloni goes there,' said Merthyr. 'I wonder whether Marini knows anything of him. They have a meeting every other night.'

Georgiana replied: 'He went there and took his daughter the night after we were at Besworth. He took her to be sworn in.'

'Still that old folly of Marini's ! ' cried Merthyr, almost wrathfully. He had some of the English objection to the mixing-up of women in political matters.

Georgiana instantly addressed herself to it: 'He thinks that the country must be saved by its women as well as its men; and if they have not brains and stedfast devotion, he concludes that the country will not be saved. But he gives them their share of the work; and, dearest, has he had reason to repent it ? '

'No,' Merthyr was forced to admit—taking shelter in

his antipathy to the administration of an oath to women. 'And consider that this is a girl!'

'The oaths of girls are sometimes more binding on them than the oaths of women.'

'True, it affects their imaginations vividly; but it seems childish. Does she have to kiss a sword and a book?'

Merthyr made a gesture like a shrug, with a desponding grimace.

'You know,' answered Georgiana, smiling, 'that I was excused any formula, by special exemption. I have no idea of what is done. Water, salt, white thorns, and other Carbonaro mysteries may be in use or not: I think no worse of the cause, whatever is done.'

'I love the cause,' said Merthyr. 'I dislike this sort of conspiratorial masque Marini and his Chief indulge in. I believe it sustains *them*, and there 's its only use.'

'I,' said Georgiana, 'love the cause only from association with it; but in my opinion Marini is right. He deals with young and fervent minds, that require a ceremony to keep them fast—yes, dear, and women more than others do. After that, they cease to have to rely upon themselves—a reliance their good instinct teaches them is frail. There, now; have I put my sex low enough?'

She slid her head against her brother's shoulder. If he had ever met a man worthy of her, Merthyr would have sighed to feel that all her precious love was his own.

'Is there any likelihood that Belloni will be there to-night?' he asked.

She shook her head. 'He has not been there since. He went for that purpose.'

'Perhaps Marini is right, after all,' said Merthyr, smiling.

Georgiana knew what he meant, and looked at him fondly.

'But I have never bound you to an oath,' he resumed, in the same tone.

'I daresay you consider me a little different from most,' said Georgiana. She had as small reserve with her brother as vanity, and could even tell him what she thought of her own worth without depreciating it after the fashion of chartered hypocrites.

Mr. Powys wrote to Marini to procure him an interview with Belloni as early as possible, and then he and Georgiana went down to Lady Charlotte.

Letters from Adela kept the Brookfield public informed of the doings on board the yacht. Before leaving home, Wilfrid with Arabella's concurrence certainly —at her instigation, as he thought—had led his father to imagine, on tolerably good grounds, that Mrs. Chump had quitted Brookfield to make purchases for her excursion on lively waters, and was then awaiting him at the appointed station. One of the old man's intermittent nervous fits had frightened them into the quasi-fabrication of this little innocent tale. The doctor's words were that Mr. Pole was to be crossed in nothing—'Not even if it should appear to be of imminent necessity that I should see him, and he refuses.' The man of science stated that the malady originated in some long-continued pressure of secret apprehension. Both Wilfrid and Arabella conceived that persuasion alone was wanted to send Mrs. Chump flying to the yacht; so they had less compunction in saying, 'She is there.'

And here began a terrible trial for the children of Fine Shades. To save a father they had to lie grievously—to continue the lie from day to day—to turn it from the lie extensive and inappreciable to the lie minute and absolute. Then, to get a particle of truth out of this monstrous lie, they had to petition in utter humiliation the woman they had scorned, that she would return

among them and consider their house her own. No answer came from Mrs. Chump ; and as each day passed, the querulous invalid, still painfully acting the man in health, had to be fed with fresh lies ; until at last, writing of one of the scenes in Brookfield, Arabella put down the word in all its unblessed aboriginal bluntness, and did not ask herself whether she shrank from it. 'Lies!' she wrote. 'What has happened to Bella?' thought Adela, in pure wonder. Salt-air and dazzling society kept all idea of penance from this vivacious young person. It was queer that Sir Twickenham should be at the sea-side, instead of at Brookfield, wooing ; but a man's physical condition should be an excuse for any intermission of attentions. 'Now that I know him better,' wrote Adela, 'I think him the pink of chivalry ; and of this I am sure I can convince you, Bella—C. will be blessed indeed ; for a delicate nature in a man of the world is a treasure. He has a beautiful little vessel of his own sailing beside us.'

Arabella was critic enough to smile at this last. On the whole she was passably content for the moment, in a severe fashion, save to feel herself the dreadful lying engine and fruitlessly abject person that she had become.

We imagine that when souls have had a fall, they immediately look up and contrast their present with their preceding position. This does not occur. The lower their fall, the less, generally, their despair, for despair is a business of the Will, and when they come heavily upon their humanity, they get something of the practical seriousness of nature. If they fall very low, the shock and the sense that they are still on their feet make them singularly earnest to set about the plain plan of existence—getting air for their lungs and elbow-room. Contrast, that mother of melancholy, comes when they are some way advanced upon the *upward* scale. The

Poles did not look up to their lost height, but merely exerted their faculties to go forward ; and great as their ambition had been in them, now that it was suddenly blown to pieces, they did not sit and weep, but strove in a stunned way to work ahead. The truth is, that we rarely indulge in melancholy until we can take it as a luxury : little people never do, and they, when we have not put them on their guard, are humankind naked.

The yachting excursions were depicted vividly by Adela, and were addressed as a sort of reproach to the lugubrious letters of her sister. She said pointedly once : ' Really, if we are to be miserable, I turn Catholic and go into a convent.' The strange thing was that Arabella imagined her letters to be rather of a cheerful character. She related the daily events at Brookfield :— the change in her father's soups, and his remarks on them, and which he preferred ; his fight with his medicine, and declaration that he was as sound as any man on shore ; the health of the servants ; Mr. Marter the curate's call with a Gregorian chant ; doubts of his orthodoxy ; Cornelia's lonely walks and singular appetite ; the bills, and so forth—ending, ' What is to be said further of *her* ? '

In return, Adela's delight was to date each day from a different port, to which, catching the wind, the party had sailed, and there slept. The ladies were under the protecting wing of the Hon. Mrs. Bayruffle, a smooth woman of the world. ' You think she must have sinned in her time, but are certain it will never be known,' wrote Adela. ' I do confess, kind as she is, she does me much harm ; for when she is near me I begin to think that Society is everything. Her tact is prodigious ; it is never seen—only felt. I cannot describe her influence ; yet it leads to nothing. I cannot absolutely respect her ; but I know I shall miss her acutely when we part.

What charm does she possess? I call her the Hon. Mrs. Heathen—Captain G., the Hon. Mrs. Balm. I know you hate nick-names. Be merciful to people yachting. What are we to do? I would look through a telescope all day and calculate the number of gulls and gannets we see; but I am not so old as Sir T., and that occupation could not *absorb me*. I begin to understand Lady Charlotte and her liking for Mr. Powys better. He is ready to play or be serious, as you please; but in either case—"Merthyr is never a buffoon nor a parson"—Lady C. remarked this morning; and that describes him, if it were not for the detestable fling at the clergy, which she never misses. It seems in her blood to think that all priests are hypocrites. What a little boat to be in on a stormy sea, Bella! She appears to have no concern about it. Whether she adores Wilfrid or not I do not pretend to guess. She snubs him—a thing he would bear from nobody but her. I do believe he feels flattered by it. He is chiefly attentive to Miss Ford, whom I like and do not like, and like and do not like—but *do* like. She is utterly cold, and has not an affection on earth. Sir T.—I have not a dictionary—calls her a fair clictic, I think. (Let even Cornelia read hard, or woe to her in their hours of privacy!—his vocabulary grows distressingly rich the more you know him. I am not uneducated, but he introduces me to words that seem monsters; I *must* pretend to know them intimately.) Well, whether a clictic or not—and pray, burn this letter, lest I should not have the word correct—she has the air of a pale young princess above any creature I have seen in the world. I know it has struck Wilfrid also; my darling and I are ever twins in sentiment. He converses with Miss Ford a great deal. Lady C. is peculiarly civil to Captain G. We scud along, and are becalmed. "Having no will of our own, we have no

knowledge of contrary winds," as Mr. Powys says.—The word is "eclictic," I find. I ventured on it and it was repeated; and I heard that I had missed a syllable. Ask C. to look it out—I mean, to tell me the meaning on a little slip of paper in your next. I would buy a pocket-dictionary at one of the ports, but you are never alone. "Æsthetic," we know. Mr. Barrett used to be of service for this sort of thing. I admit I *am* inferior to Mrs. Bayruffle, who, if men talk difficult words in her presence, holds her chin above the conversation, and seems to shame them. I love to learn—I love the humility of learning. And there is something divine in the idea of a teacher. I listen to Sir T. on Parliament and parties, and chide myself if my interest flags. His algebra-puzzles, or Euclid-puzzles in figures—sometimes about sheep-boys and sheep, and hurdles or geese, oxen or anything—are delicious: he quite masters the conversation with them. I disagree with Mrs. Bayruffle when she complains that they are posts in the way of speech. There is a use in all men; and though she is an acknowledged tactician *materially*, she cannot see she has in Sir T. a quality necessary to intellectual conversation, if she knew how to employ it.'

Remarks of this nature read very oddly to Arabella, insomuch that she would question herself at times, in forced seriousness, whether she had dreamed that an evil had befallen Brookfield, or whether Adela were forgetting that it had, in a dream. One day she enclosed a letter from her father to Mrs. Chump. Adela did not forge a reply; but she had the audacity to give the words of a message from the woman (in which Mrs. Chump was supposed to say that she could not write while she was being tossed about). 'We must carry it on,' Adela told her sister, with horrible bluntness. The message savoured strongly of Mrs. Chump. It was wickedly

clever. Arabella resolved to put it by; but morning after morning she saw her father's anxiety for the reply mounting to a pitch of fever. She consulted with Cornelia, who said, 'No; never do such a thing!' and subsequently, with a fainter firmness, repeated the negative monosyllable. Arabella, in her wretchedness, became endued with remorseless discernment. 'It means that Cornelia would never do it herself,' she thought; and, comforted haply by reflecting that for their common good she could do it, she did it. She repeated an Irish message. Her father calmed immediately, making her speak it over twice. He smiled, and blinked his bird's-eyes pleasurably: 'Ah! that 's Martha,' he said, and fell into a state of comparative repose. For some hours a sensation of bubbling hot-water remained about the ears of Arabella. Happily Mrs. Chump in person did not write.

A correspondence now commenced between the fictitious Mrs. Chump on sea and Mr. Pole, dyspeptic, in his arm-chair. Arabella took the doctor aside to ask him, if in a hypothetical instance, it would really be dangerous to thwart or irritate her father. She asked the curate if he deemed it wicked to speak falsely to an invalid for the invalid's benefit. The spiritual and bodily doctors agreed that occasion altered and necessity justified certain acts. So far there was comfort. But the task of assisting in this correspondence, and yet more, the contemplation of Adela's growing delight in it (she would now use Irish words, vulgar words, words expressive of physical facts; airing her natural wit in Irish as if she had found a new weapon), became a bitter strain on Arabella's mind, and she was compelled to make Cornelia take her share of the burden. 'But I cannot conceal—I cannot feign,' said Cornelia. Arabella looked at her, whom she knew to be feigning,

thinking, 'Must I lose my high esteem of both my sisters?' Action alone saved her from denuding herself of this garment.

'That night!' was now the allusion to the scene at Besworth. It stood for all the misery they suffered; nor could they see that they had since made any of their own.

A letter with the Dover postmark brought exciting news.

A debate had been held on board the yacht. Wilfrid and Lady Charlotte gave their votes for the Devon coast. All were ready to be off, when Miss Ford received a telegram from shore, and said, 'No; it must be Dover.' Now, Mrs. Chump's villa was on the Devon coast. Lady Charlotte had talked to Wilfrid about her, and in the simplest language had said that she must be got on board. This was the reason of their deciding for Devon. But Georgiana stood for Dover; thither Merthyr said that he must go, whether he sailed or went on land. By a simultaneous reading of Georgiana's eyes, both Wilfrid and Lady Charlotte saw what was meant by her decision. Wilfrid at once affected to give way, half-protestingly. 'And this,' wrote Adela, 'taught me that he was well pleased to abandon the West for the East. Lady C. favoured him with a look such as I could not have believed I should ever behold off the stage. There was a perfect dagger in her eyes. She fought against Dover: *do* men feel such compliments as these? They are the only true ones! She called the captain to witness that the wind was *not* for Dover: she called the mate: she was really eloquent—yes, and *handsome*. I think Wilfrid thought so; or the reason for the opposition to Dover impressed my brother. I like him to be made to look foolish, for then he retrieves his character so dashingly—always. His face was red,

and he seemed undecided—was—until one taunt (it must have been a taunt) roused him up. They exchanged about six sentences—these two. I cannot remember them, unhappily; but for neatness and irony, never was anything so delicious heard. They came sharp as fencing-thrusts; and you could really believe, if you liked, that they were merely stating grounds for diverse opinions. Of course we sailed East, reaching Dover at ten; and the story is this—I knew Emilia was in it:—Tracy Runningbrook had been stationed at Dover ten days by Miss Ford, to intercept Emilia's father, if he should be found taking her to the Continent by that route. He waited, and met them at last on the Esplanade. He telegraphed to Miss Ford and a Signor Marini (we were wrong in not adding illustrious exiles to our list), while he invited them to dine, and detained them till the steamboat was starting; and Signor Marini came down by rail in a great hurry, and would not let Emilia be taken away. There was a quarrel; but, by some mysterious power that he possesses, this Signor Marini actually prevented the father from taking his child. Mysterious? But is anything more mysterious than Emilia's influence? I cannot forget what she was ere we trained her; and when I think that we seem to be all—all who come near her—connected with her fortunes! Explain it if you can. I know it is not her singing; I know it is not her looks. Captivations she does not deal in. Is it the magic of indifference? No; for then some one whom you know and who longs to kiss her bella Bella now would be dangerous! She is very little so, believe me!

'Emilia is (am I chronicling a princess?)—she is in London with Signor Marini; and Wilfrid has *not* seen her. Lady Charlotte managed to get the first boat full,

and pushed off as he was about to descend. I pitied his poor trembling hand! I went on shore in the second boat with him. We did not find the others for an hour, when we heard that Emilia had gone with Signor M. The next day, whom should we see but Mr. Pericles. He (I have never seen him so civil)—he shook Wilfrid by the hand almost like an Englishman; and Wilfrid too, though he detests him, was civil to him, and even laughed when he said: "Here it is dull; ze Continent for a week. I follow Philomela—ze nightingales." I was just going to say, "Well, then, you are running away from *one*." Wilfrid pressed my fingers, and taught me to be still; and I did not know why till I reflected. Poor Mr. Pericles, seeing him friendly for the first time, rubbed his hands; and it was most painful to me to see him shake hands with Wilfrid again and again, till he was on board the vessel chuckling. Wilfrid suddenly laughed with all his might—a cruel laugh; and Mr. Pericles tried to be as loud, but commenced coughing and tapping his chest, to explain that his intention was good. Bella! the passion of love *must* be judged by the person who inspires it; and I cannot even go so far as to feel pity for Wilfrid if he has stooped to the humiliation of—there is another way of regarding it, I know. Let him be sincere and noble; but not *his own victim*. He scarcely holds up his head. We are now for Devon. Tracy is with us; and we never did a wiser thing than when we decided to patronize poets. If kept in order—under—they are the aristocracy of light conversationalists. Adieu! We speed for beautiful Devon. "Me love to Pole, and I 'm just, etc." That will do this time; next, she will speak herself. That I should wish it! But the world is full of change, as I begin to learn. What will ensue?'

CHAPTER XXXV

MRS. CHUMP'S EPISTLE

When Mrs. Chump had turned her back on Brookfield, the feelings of the outcast woman were too deep for much distinctly acrimonious sensation toward the ladies; but their letters soon lifted and revived her, until, being in a proper condition of prickly wrath, she sat down to compose a reply that should bury them under a mountain of shame. The point, however, was to transfer this mountain from her bosom, which laboured heavily beneath it, to their heads. Nothing could appear simpler. Here is the mountain; the heads are yonder. Accordingly, she prepared to commence. In a moment the difficulty yawned monstrous. For the mountain she felt was not a mountain of shame; yet that was the character of mountain she wished to cast. If she crushed them, her reputation as a forgiving soul might suffer: she could not pardon without seeing them abased. Thus shaken at starting, she found herself writing: 'I know that your father has been hearing tales told of me, or he would have written, and he has not; so you shall never see me, not if you cried to me from the next world—the hot part.'

Perusing this, it was too tremendous. 'Oh, that 's awful!' she said, getting her body a little away from the manuscript. 'Ye couldn't curse much louder.'

A fresh trial found her again rounding the fact that Mr. Pole had not written to her, and again flying into consequent angers. She had some dim conception of the sculpture of an offended Goddess. 'I look so,' she said before the glass: 'I 'm above ye, and ye can't

hurt me, and don't come anigh me : but here 's a cheque —and may ye be haunted in your dreams !—but here 's a cheque.'

There was pain in her heart, for she had felt faith in Mr. Pole's affection for her. ' And he said,' she cried out in her lonely room—' he said, " Martha, ye 've onnly to come and be known to 'm, and then they 'll take to the ideea." And wasn't I a patient creature ! And it 's Pole that 's turned—Pole ! '

Varied with the frequent ' Oh ! ' and ' Augh ! ' these dramatic monologues occupied her time while the yacht was sailing for her Devon bay.

At last the thought struck her that she would send for Braintop—telegraphing that expenses would be paid, and that he must come with a good quill. ' It goes faster,' she whispered, suggesting the pent-up torrent, as it were, of blackest ink in her breast that there was to pour forth. A very cunning postscript to the telegram brought Braintop almost as quick to her as a return message. It was merely—' Little Belloni.'

She had forgotten this piece of artifice : but when she saw him start at the opening of the door, keeping a sheepish watch in that direction, ' By'n-by,' she said, with a nod ; and shortly afterward unfolded her object in summoning him from his London labours : ' A widde-woman ought to get marrud, Mr. Braintop, if onnly to have a husband to write letters for 'rr. Now, that 's a task ! But sup to-night, and mind ye say yer prayers before gettin' into bed ; and no tryin' to flatter your Maker with your knees cuddled up to your chin under the counterpane. I do 't myself sometimes, and I *know* one prayer out of bed 's worrth ten of 'm in. Then I 'll pray too ; and mayhap we 'll get permission and help to write our letter to-morrow, though Sunday, as ye say.'

On the morrow Braintop's spirits were low, he having perceived that the 'Little Belloni' postscript had been but an Irish chuckle and nudge in his ribs, by way of sly insinuation or reminder. He looked out on the sea, and sighed to be under certain white sails visible in the offing. Mrs. Chump had received by the morning's post another letter from Arabella, enclosing one for Wilfrid. A dim sense of approaching mastery, and that she might soon be melted, combined with the continued silence of Mr. Pole to make her feel yet more spiteful. She displayed no commendable cunning when, to sharpen and fortify Braintop's wits, she plumped him at breakfast with all things tempting to the appetite of man. 'I 'll help ye to 'rr,' she said from time to time, finding that no encouragement made him potent in speech.

Fronting the sea a desk was laid open. On it were the quills faithfully brought down by Braintop.

'Pole's own quills,' she said, having fixed Braintop in this official seat, while she took hers at a station half-commanding the young clerk's face. The mighty breakfast had given Braintop intolerable desire to stretch his limbs by the sounding shore, and enjoy life in semi-oblivion. He cheered himself with the reflection that there was only one letter to write, so he remarked politely that he was at his hostess's disposal. Thereat Mrs. Chump questioned him closely whether Mr. Pole had spoken her name aloud, and whether he did it somehow now and then by accident, and whether he had looked worse of late. Braintop answered the latter question first, assuring her that Mr. Pole was improving.

'Then there 's no marcy from me,' said Mrs. Chump; and immediately discharged an exclamatory narrative of her recent troubles, and the breach between herself and Brookfield, at Braintop's ears. This done, she told

him that he was there to write the reply to the letters of the ladies, in her name. 'Begin,' she said. 'Ye 've got head enough to guess my feelin's. I 'm invited, and I won't go—till I 'm fetched. But don't say that. That 's *their* guess ye know. "And I don't care for ye enough to be angry at all, but it 's pity I feel at a parcel of fine garls "—so on, Mr. Braintop.'

The perplexities of epistolary correspondence were assuming the like proportions to the recruited secretary that they had worn to Mrs. Chump. Steadily watching his countenance, she jogged him thus : 'As if ye couldn't help ut, ye know, ye begin. Just like wakin' in the mornin' after dancin' all night. Ye make the garls seem to hear me seemin' to say—Oooo ! I *was* so comfortable before your disturbin' me with your horrud voices. Ye understand, Mr. Braintop ? "I 'm in bed, and you 're a cold bath." Begin like that, ye know. "Here 's clover, and you 're nettles." D' ye see ? "Here from my glass o' good Porrt to your tumbler of horrud acud vin'gar." Bless the boy ! he don't begin.'

She stamped her foot. Braintop, in desperation, made a plunge at the paper. Looking over his shoulder in a delighted eagerness, she suddenly gave it a scornful push. '"Dear !"' she exclaimed. 'You 're dearin' them, absurd young man ! *I 'm* not the woman to "dear" 'em—not at the starrt ! I 'm indignant—I 'm hurrt. I come round to the "dear" by-and-by, after I have whipped each of the proud sluts, and their brother Mr. Wilfrud, just as if by accident. Ye 'll promus to forget avery secret I tell ye ; but our way is *always* to pretend to believe the men can't help themselves. So the men look like fools, ye sly laughin' fella ! and the women horrud scheming spiders. Now, away with ye, and no dearin','

The Sunday-bells sounded mockingly in Braintop's ears, appearing to ask him how he liked his holiday; and the white sails on the horizon line have seldom taunted prisoner more. He spread out another sheet of note-paper and wrote 'My,' and there he stopped.

Mrs. Chump was again at his elbow. 'But, they aren't "my,"' she remonstrated, 'when I 've nothin' to do with 'm. And a "my" has a "dear" to 't always. Ye 're not awake, Mr. Braintop; try again.'

'Shall I begin formally, "Mrs. Chump presents her compliments," ma'am?' said Braintop stiffly.

'And I stick myself up on a post, and talk like a parrot, sir! Don't ye see, I 'm familiar, and I 'm woundud? Go along; try again.'

Braintop's next effort was, 'Ladies.'

'But they don't behave to me like ladus, and it 's against my conscience to call 'em!' said Mrs. Chump, with resolution.

Braintop wrote down 'Women,' in the very irony of disgust.

'And avery one of 'em unmarrud garls!' exclaimed Mrs. Chump, throwing up her hands. 'Mr. Braintop! Mr. Braintop! ye 're next to an ejut!'

Braintop threw down the pen. 'I really do *not* know what to say,' he remarked, rising in distress.

'I naver had such a desire to shake anny man in all my life,' said Mrs. Chump, dropping to her chair.

The posture of affairs was chimed to by the monotonous bell. After listening to it for some minutes, Mrs. Chump was struck with a notion that Braintop's sinfulness in working on a Sunday, or else the shortness of the prayer he had put up to gain absolution, was the cause of his lack of ready wit. Hearing that he had gloves, she told him to go to church, listen devoutly, and return to luncheon. Braintop departed, with a sensation of

relief in the anticipation of a sermon, quite new to him. When he next made his bow to his hostess, he was greeted by a pleasant sparkle of refreshments. Mrs. Chump herself primed him with Sherry, thinking in the cunning of her heart that it might haply help the inspiration derived from his devotional exercise. After this, pen and paper were again produced.

'Well, now, Mr. Braintop, and what have ye thought of?' said Mrs. Chump, encouragingly.

Braintop thought rapidly over what he might possibly have been thinking of; and having put a file of ideas into the past, said, with the air of a man who delicately suggests a subtlety: 'It has struck me, ma'am, that perhaps "Girls" might begin very well. To be sure "Dear girls" is the best, if you would consent to it.'

'Take another glass of wine, Mr. Braintop,' Mrs. Chump nodded. 'Ye 're nearer to ut now. "Garls" is what they are, at all events. But don't you see, my dear young man, it isn't the real thing we want so much as a sort of a proud beginnin', shorrt of slappin' their faces. Think of a dinner. Furrst soup; that prepares ye for what 's comin'. Then fish, which is on the road to meat, d' ye see?—we pepper 'em. Then joint, Mr. Braintop—out we burrst: "Oh, and what ins'lent hussies ye 've been to me, and ye 'll naver see annything of me but my back!" Then the sweets,—"But I 'm a forgivin' woman, and a Christian in the bargain, ye ungrateful minxes; and if ye really are sorrowful!" And there, Mr. Braintop, ye 've got ut all laid out as flat as a pancake.'

Mrs. Chump gave the motion of a lightning scrawl of the pen. Braintop looked at the paper, which now appeared to recede from his eyes, and flourish like a descending kite. The nature of the task he had undertaken became mountainous in his imagination, till at

last he fixed his forehead in his thumbs and fingers, and resolutely counted a number of meaningless words one hundred times. As this was the attitude of a severe student, Mrs. Chump remained in expectation. Aware of the fearful confidence he had excited in her, Braintop fell upon a fresh hundred, with variations.

'The truth is, I think better in church,' he said, disclosing at last as ingenuous a face as he could assume. He scarcely ventured to hope for a second dismissal.

To his joy, Mrs. Chump responded with a sigh: 'There, go again; and the Lord forgive ye for directin' your mind to temporal matters when ye 're there! It 's none of my doin', remember that; and don't be tryin' to make me a partic'pator in your wickudness.'

'This is so difficult, ma'am, because you *won't* begin with "Dear,"' he observed snappishly, as he was retiring.

'Of coorse it 's difficult if it bothers *me*,' retorted Mrs. Chump, divided between that view of the case and contempt of Braintop for being on her own level.

'Do you see, we are not to say "Dear" anything, or "Ladies," or—in short, really, if you come to think, ma'am!'

'Is that a woman's business, Mr. Braintop?' said Mrs. Chump, as from a height; and the youth retired in humiliation.

Braintop was not destitute of the ambition of his time of life, and yearned to be what he believed himself —something better than a clerk. If he had put forth no effort to compose Mrs. Chump's letter, he would not have felt that he was the partner of her stupidity; but he had thoughtlessly attempted the impossible thing, and now, contemplating his utter failure, he was in so low a state of mind that he would have taken pen and written himself down, with ordinary honesty, good-

for-nothing. He returned to his task, and found the dinner spread. Mrs. Chump gave him champagne, and drank to him, requesting him to challenge her. 'We won't be beaten,' she said; and at least they dined.

The 'we' smote Braintop's swelling vanity. It signified an alliance, and that they were yoked to a common difficulty.

'Oh! let 's finish it and have it over,' he remarked, with a complacent roll in his chair.

'Naver stop a good impulse,' said Mrs. Chump, herself removing the lamp to light him.

Braintop sat in the chair of torture, and wrote flowingly, while his taskmistress looked over him, 'Ladies of Brookfield.' He read it out: 'Ladies of Brookfield.'

'I 'll be vary happy to represent ye at the forthcomin' 'lection,' Mrs. Chump gave a continuation in his tone.

'Why, won't that do, ma'am?' Braintop asked in wonderment.

'Cap'tal for a circular, Mr. Braintop. And ye 'll allow me to say that I don't think ye 've been to church at all.'

This accusation containing a partial truth (that is, true if it referred to the afternoon, but not as to the morning), it was necessary for Braintop's self-vindication that he should feel angry. The two were very soon recriminating, much in the manner of boy and girl shut up on a sunny afternoon; after which they, in like manner, made it up—the fact of both having a habit of consulting the glass, and the accident of their doing it at the same time, causing an encounter of glances there that could hardly fail to be succeeded by some affability. For a last effort, Mrs. Chump laid before Braintop a prospect of advancement in his office, if he

so contrived as to write a letter that should land her in Brookfield among a scourged, repentant, and forgiven people. That he might understand the position, she went far modestly to reveal her weakness for Mr. Pole. She even consented to let 'Ladies' be the opening apostrophe, provided the word 'Young' went before it: 'They 'll feel that sting,' she said. Braintop stipulated that she should not look till the letter was done; and, observing his pen travelling the lines in quick succession, Mrs. Chump became inspired by a great but uneasy hope. She was only to be restrained from peeping by Braintop's petulant 'Pray, ma'am!' which sent her bouncing back to her chair, with a face upon one occasion too solemn for Braintop's gravity. He had written himself into excellent spirits; and happening to look up as Mrs. Chump retreated from his shoulder, the woman's comic reverence for his occupation—the prim movement of her lips while she repeated mutely the words she supposed he might be penning—touched him to laughter. At once Mrs. Chump seized on the paper. 'Young ladus,' she read aloud, 'yours of the 2nd, the 14th, and 21st ulto. The 'ffection I bear to your onnly remaining parent.'

Her enunciation waxed slower and significantly staccato toward a pause. The composition might undoubtedly have issued from a merchant's office, and would have done no discredit to the establishment. When the pause came, Braintop, half for an opinion, and to encourage progress, said, 'Yes, ma'am'; and with 'There, sir!' Mrs. Chump crumpled up the paper and flung it at him. 'And there, sir!' she tossed a pen. Hearing Braintop mutter, 'Ladylike behaviour,' Mrs. Chump came out in a fiery bloom. 'Ye detestable young fella! Oh, ye young deceiver! Ye cann't do the work of a man! Oh! and here 's another woman

dis'pointed, and when she thought she 'd got a man to write her letters ! '

Braintop rose and retorted.

' Ye 're false, Mr. Braintop—ye 're offensuv, sir ! ' said Mrs. Chump ; and Braintop instantly retired upon an expressive bow. When he was out of the room, Mrs. Chump appealed spitefully to an audience of chairs ; but when she heard the front-door shut with a report, she jumped up in terror, crying incredulously, ' Is the young man pos'tively gone ? Oh ! and me alone in a rage ! '—the contemplated horrors of which position set her shouting vociferously. ' Mr. Braintop ! ' sounded over the stairs, and ' Mr. Braintop ! ' into the street. The maid brought Mrs. Chump her bonnet. Night had fallen ; and nothing but the greatest anxiety to recover Braintop would have tempted her from her house. She made half-a-dozen steps, and then stopped to mutter, ' Oh ! if ye 'd onnly come, I 'd forgive ye—indeed I would ! '

' Well, here I am,' was instantaneously answered ; her waist was clasped, and her forehead was kissed.

The madness of Braintop's libertinism petrified her.

' Ye 've taken such a liberty, sir—'deed ye 've forgotten yourself ! '

While she was speaking, she grew confused with the thought that Braintop had mightily altered both in voice and shape. When on the doorstep he said, ' Come out of the darkness or, upon my honour, I shall behave worse,' she recognized Wilfrid, and understood by his yachting costume in what manner he had come. He gave her no time to think of her dignity or her wrath. ' Lady Charlotte is with me. I sleep at the hotel ; but you have no objection to receive *her*, have you ? ' This set her mind upon her best bedroom, her linen, and the fitness of her roof to receive a title. Then, in

a partial fit of gratitude for the honour, and immense thankfulness at being spared the task of the letter, she fell on Wilfrid's shoulder, beginning to sob—till he, in alarm at his absurd position, suggested that Lady Charlotte awaited a welcome. Mrs. Chump immediately flew to her drawing-room and rang bells, appearing presently with a lamp, which she set on a garden-pillar. Together they stood by the lamp, a spectacle to ocean: but no Lady Charlotte drew near.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ANOTHER PITFALL OF SENTIMENT

Though Mrs. Chump and Wilfrid, as they stood by the light of the lamp, saw no one, they themselves were seen. Lady Charlotte had arranged to give him a moment in advance to make his peace. She had settled it with that air of practical sense which her title made graceful to him. 'I will follow; and I daresay I can complete what you leave unfinished,' she said. Her humorous sense of the aristocratic prestige was conveyed to him in a very taking smile. He scarcely understood why she should have planned so decisively to bring about a reconciliation between Mrs. Chump and his family; still, as it now chimed perfectly with his own views and wishes, he acquiesced in her scheme, giving her at the same time credit for more than common wisdom.

While Lady Charlotte lingered on the beach, she became aware of a figure that hung about her; and as she was moving away, a voice of one she knew well enough asked to be directed to the house inhabited by Mrs.

Chump. The lady was more startled than it pleased her to admit to herself.

'Don't you know me?' she said, bluntly.

'You!' went Emilia's voice.

'Why on earth are you here? What brings you here? Are you alone?' returned the lady.

Emilia did not answer.

'What extraordinary expedition are you making? But, tell me one thing: are you here of your own accord, or at somebody else's bidding?'

Impatient at the prospect of a continuation of silences, Lady Charlotte added, 'Come with me.'

Emilia seemed to be refusing.

'The appointment was made at that house, I know,' said the lady; 'but if you come with me, you will see him just as readily.'

At this instant, the lamp was placed on the pillar, showing Wilfrid, in his sailor's hat and overcoat, beside the fluttering Irishwoman.

'Come, I must speak to you first,' said Lady Charlotte hurriedly, thinking that she saw Emilia's hands stretch out. 'Pray, don't go into attitudes. There he is, as you perceive; and I don't use witchcraft. Come with me; I will send for him. Haven't you learnt by this time that there 's nothing he detests so much as a public display of the kind you 're trying to provoke?'

Emilia half comprehended her.

'He changes when he 's away from me,' she said, in a low toneless voice.

'Less than I fancied,' the lady thought.

Then she told Emilia that there was really no necessity for her to whine and be miserable; she was among friends, and so forth. The simplicity of her manner of speech found its way to Emilia's reason quicker than her arguments; and, in the belief that Wilfrid was speaking

to Mrs. Chump on urgent private matters (she had great awe of the word 'business'), Emilia suffered herself to be led away. She uttered twice a little exclamation, as she looked back, that sounded exceedingly comical to Lady Charlotte's ears. They were the repressions of a poignant outcry. 'Doggies make that noise,' thought the lady, and succeeded in feeling contemptuous.

Wilfrid, when he found that Lady Charlotte was not coming, bestowed a remark upon her sex, and went indoors for his letter. He considered it politic not to read it there, Mrs. Chump having grown so friendly, and even motherly, that she might desire, out of pure affection, to share the contents. He put it by and talked gaily, till Mrs. Chump, partly to account for the defection of the lady, observed that she knew they had a quarrel. She was confirmed in this idea on a note being brought in to him, over which, before opening it, he frowned and flushed. Aware of the treachery of his countenance, he continued doing so after his eyes had taken in the words, though there was no special ground furnished by them for any such exhibition. Mrs. Chump immediately, with a gaze of mightiest tribulation, burst out: 'I 'll help ye; 'pon my honour, I 'll help ye. Oh! the arr'stocracy! Oh, their pride! But if I say, my dear, when I die (which it 's so horrud to think of), you 'll have a share, and the biggest—this vary cottage, and a good parrt o' the Bank property—she 'll come down at that. And if ye marry a lady of title, I 'll be 's good as my word, I will.'

Wilfrid pressed her fingers. 'Can you ever believe that I have called you a "simmering pot of Emerald broth"?'

'My dear! annything that 's lots o' words, ye may call me,' returned Mrs. Chump, 'as long as it 's no name. Ye won't call me a name, will ye? Lots o' words—it 's

onnly as if ye peppered me, and I sneeze, and that 's all ; but a name sticks to yer back like a bit o' pinned paper. Don't call me a name,' and she wriggled pathetically.

'Yes,' said Wilfrid, 'I shall call you Pole.'

'Oh ! ye sweetest of young fellas ! '

Mrs. Chump threw out her arms. She was on the point of kissing him, but he fenced with the open letter ; and learning that she might read it, she gave a cry of joy.

'"Dear W. ! " she begins ; and it 's twice dear from a lady of title. She 's just a multiplication-table for annything she says and touches. "Dear W. ! " and the shorter time a single *you* the better. I 'll have my joke, Mr. Wilfrud. "Dear W. ! " Bless her heart now ! I seem to like her next best to the Queen already. —"I have another plan." Ye 'd better keep to the old ; but it 's two paths, I suppose, to one point.— "Another plan. Come to me at the Dolphin, where I am *alone*." Oh, Lord ! "Alone," with a line under it, Mr. Wilfrud ! But there — the arr'stocracy needn't matter a bit.'

'It 's a very singular proceeding not the less,' said Wilfrid. 'Why didn't she go to the hotel where the others are, if she wouldn't come here ? '

'But the arr'stocracy, Mr. Wilfrud ! And alone— alone ! d' ye see ? which couldn't be among the others, becas of sweet whisperin'. "Alone," ' Mrs. Chump read on ; '"and to-morrow I 'll pay my respects to what you call your simmering pot of Emerald broth." Oh ye hussy ! I 'd say, if ye weren't a borrn lady. And signs ut all, "Your faithful Charlotte." Mr. Wilfrud, I 'd give five pounds for this letter if I didn't know ye wouldn't part with it under fifty. And 'deed I am a simmerin' pot ; for she 'll be a *relation*, my dear ! Go

to 'r. I 'll have your bed ready for ye here at the end of an hour; and to-morrow perhaps, if Lady Charlotte can spare me, I 'll condescend to see Ad'la.'

Wilfrid fanned her cheek with the note, and then dropped it on her neck and left the room. He was soon hurrying on his way to the Dolphin: midway he stopped. 'There may be a bad shot in Bella's letter,' he thought. Shop-lights were ahead: a very luminous chemist sent a green ray into the darkness. Wilfrid fixed himself under it. 'Confoundedly appropriate for a man reading that his wife has run away from him!' he muttered, and had quickly plunged into matter quite as absorbing. When he had finished it he shivered. Thus it ran:—

'My beloved brother,

'I bring myself to plain words. Happy those who can trifle with human language! Papa has at last taken us into his confidence. He has not spoken distinctly; he did us the credit to see that it was not necessary. If in our abyss of grief we lose delicacy, what is left?—what!

'*The step he desired to take,* WHICH WE OPPOSED, *he has anticipated,* AND MUST CONSUMMATE.

'Oh, Wilfrid! you see it, do you not? You comprehend me I am sure! I should have said "*had* anticipated." How to convey to you! (but it would be unjust to *him*—to ourselves—were I to say emphatically what I have not yet a right to think). What I have hinted above is, after all, nothing but Cornelia's conjecture, I wish I could not say confirmed by mine. We sat with Papa two hours before *any* idea of his meaning dawned upon us. He first scolded us. We both saw from this that more was to come.

'I hope there are not many in this world to whom the thought of *honour* being tied to *money* ever appears possible. If it is so there is wide suffering—deep, for

it must be silent. Cornelia suggests one comfort for them—that they will think less of poverty.

'Why was Brookfield ever bought? Our old peaceful City-life!—the vacant Sundays!—my ears are haunted by their bells for Evening Service. I said—"There they go, the dowdy population of heaven!" I remember it now. It should be almost punishment enough to be certain that of all those people going to church, there cannot be one more miserable than we who stood at the old window ridiculing them. They at least do not feel that *everything* they hope for in human life is dependent upon *one human will*—the will of a mortal weather-vane! It is the case, and it must be conciliated. There is no half-measure—no choice. Feel that nothing you have ever dreamed of can be a disgrace if it is undergone to forestall what positively impends, and act immediately. I shall expect to see you in three days. She is to have the South-west bedroom (mine), for which she expressed a preference. Prepare every mind for the ceremony:—an old man's infatuation—money—we submit. It will take place in town. To have the Tinleys in the church! But this is certainly my experience, that misfortune makes me feel more and more superior to those whom I despise. I have even asked myself—was I so once? And, *àpropos* of Laura! We hear that their evenings are occupied in performing the scene at Besworth. They are still as distant as ever from Richford. Let me add that Albert Tinley requested my hand in marriage yesterday. I agree with Cornelia that this is the first palpable sign that we have sunk. Consequent upon the natural consequences came the interview with Papa.

'Dearest, dearest Wilfrid! can you, can I, can any one of us *settle*—that is, involve another life in doubt while doubt exists? Papa insists; his argument is,

"Now, now, and no delay." I accuse nothing but his love. Excessive love is perilous for principle!

'You have understood me, I know, and forgiven me for writing so nakedly. I dare not reperuse it. You must satisfy him that Lady C. has fixed a date. Adela is incomprehensible. One day she sees a friend in Lady C., and again it is an enemy. Papa's immediate state of health is not alarming. Above all things, do not let *the girl* come near him. Papa will send the cheque you required.'

'When?' Wilfrid burst out upon Arabella's affectionate signature. 'When will he send it? He doesn't do me the honour to mention the time. And this is his reply to a third application!'

The truth was that Wilfrid was in dire want of tangible cash simply to provision his yacht. The light kindled in him by this unsatisfied need made him keen to comprehend all that Arabella's attempt at plain writing designed to unfold.

'Good God, my father's the woman's trustee!' shaped itself in Wilfrid's brain.

And next: 'If he marries her we may all be as poor as before.' That is to say, 'Honour may be saved without ruin being averted.'

His immediate pressing necessity struck like a pulse through all the chords of dismal conjecture. His heart flying about for comfort, dropped at Emilia's feet.

'Bella's right,' he said, reverting to the green page in his hand; 'we can't involve others in our scrape, whatever it may be.'

He ceased on the spot to be at war with himself, as he had been for many a day; by which he was taught to imagine that he had achieved a mental indifference to misfortune. This lightened his spirit considerably. 'So there's an end of *that*,' he emphasized, as the resolve

took form to tell Lady Charlotte flatly that his father was ruined, and that the son, therefore, renounced his particular hope and aspiration.

'She will say, in the most matter-of-fact way in the world, "Oh, very well, that quite alters the case,"' said Wilfrid aloud, with the smallest infusion of bitterness. Then he murmured, 'Poor old governor!' and wondered whether Emilia would come to this place according to his desire. Love, that had lain crushed in him for the few recent days, sprang up and gave him the thought, 'She may be here now'; but, his eyes not being satiated instantly with a sight of her, the possibility of such happiness faded out.

'Blessed little woman!' he cried openly, ashamed to translate in tenderer terms the soft fresh blossom of love that his fancy conjured forth at the recollection of her. He pictured to himself hopefully, moreover, that she would be shy when they met. A contradictory vision of her eyes lifted hungry for his first words, or the pressure of his arm displeased him slightly. It occurred to him that they would be characterized as a singular couple. To combat this he drew around him all the mysteries of sentiment that had issued from her voice and her eyes. She had made earth lovely to him and heaven human. She—— what a grief for ever that her origin should be what it was! For this reason:—lovers must live like ordinary people outwardly; and say, ye Fates, how had she been educated to direct a gentleman's household?

'*I* can't exist on potatoes,' he pronounced humorously.

But when his thoughts began to dwell with fitting seriousness on the woman-of-the-world tone to be expected from Lady Charlotte, he folded the mental image of Emilia closely to his breast, and framed a misty idea of a little lighted cottage wherein she sat

singing to herself while he was campaigning. 'Two or three fellows—Lumley and Fredericks—shall see her,' he thought. The rest of his brother officers were not even to know that he was married.

His yacht was lying in a strip of moonlight near Sir Twickenham's companion yawl. He gave one glance at it, as at a history finished, and sent up his name to Lady Charlotte.

'Ah! you haven't brought the good old dame with you?' she said, rising to meet him. 'I thought it better not to see her to-night.'

He acquiesced, mentioning the lateness of the hour, and adding, 'You are alone?'

She stared, and let fall 'Certainly,' and then laughed. 'I had forgotten your regard for the proprieties. I have just sent my maid for Georgiana; she will sleep here. I preferred to come here, because those people at the hotel tire me; and, besides, I said I should sleep at the villa, and I never go back to people who don't expect me.'

Wilfrid looked about the room perplexed, and almost suspicious because of his unexplained perplexity. Her (as he deemed it—not much above the level of Mrs. Chump in that respect) aristocratic indifference to opinion and conventional social observances would have pleased him by daylight, but it fretted him now.

Lady Charlotte's maid came in to say that Miss Ford would join her. The maid was dismissed to her bed. 'There 's nothing to do there,' said her mistress, as she was moving to the folding-doors. The window facing seaward was open. He went straight to it and closed it. Next, in an apparent distraction, he went to the folding-doors. He was about to press the handle, when Lady Charlotte's quiet remark, 'My bedroom,' brought him back to his seat, crying pardon.

'Have you had news?' she inquired. 'You thought that a letter might be there. Bad, is it?'

'It is not good,' he replied, briefly.

'I am sorry.'

'That is—it tells me——' (Wilfrid disciplined his tongue)—'that I—we are—a Lieutenant on half-pay may say that he is ruined, I suppose, when his other supplies are cut off . . .!'

'I can excuse him for thinking it,' said Lady Charlotte. She exhibited no sign of eagerness for his statement of facts.

Her outward composure and a hard animation of countenance (which, having ceased the talking within himself, he had now leisure to notice) humiliated him. The sting helped him to progress.

'I may try to doubt it as much as I please, to avoid seeing what must follow. . . . I may shut my eyes in the dark, but when the light stares me in the face . . . I give you my word that I have not been justified even in imagining such a catastrophe.'

'The preamble is awful,' said Lady Charlotte, rising from her recumbent posture.

'Pardon me; I have no right to intrude my feelings. I learn to-day, for the first time, that we are—are ruined.'

She did not lift her eyebrows, or look fixedly; but without any change at all, said, 'Is there no doubt about it?'

'None whatever.' This was given emphatically. Resentment at the perfect realization of her anticipated worldly indifference lent him force.

'Ruined?' she said.

'Yes.'

'You can't be more so than you were a month ago. I mean, you tell me nothing new; I have known it.'

Amid the crush and hurry in his brain, caused by this

strange communication, pressed the necessity to vindicate his honour.

'I give you the word of a gentleman, Lady Charlotte, that I came to you the first moment it has been made known to me. I never suspected it before this day.'

'Nothing would prompt me to disbelieve that.' She reached him her hand.

'*You* have known it!' he broke from a short silence.

'Yes—never mind how. I could not allude to it. Of course I had to wait till you took the initiative.'

The impulse to think the best of what we are on the point of renouncing is spontaneous. If at the same time this object shall exhibit itself in altogether new, undreamt-of, glorious colours, others besides a sentimentalist might waver, and be in some danger of clutching it a little tenderly ere it is cast off.

'My duty was to tell you the very instant it came to my knowledge,' he said, fascinated in his heart by the display of greatness of mind which he now half divined to be approaching, and wished to avoid.

'Well, I suppose that is a duty between friends?' said she.

'Between friends! Shall we still—always be friends?'

'I think I have said more than once that it won't be my fault if we are not.'

'Because, the greater and happier ambition to which I aspired . . .' This was what he designed to say, sentimentally propelled, by way of graceful exit, and what was almost printed on a scroll in his head for the tongue to read off fluently. He stopped at 'the greater,' beginning to stumble—to flounder; and fearing that he said less than was due as a compliment to the occasion, he said more.

By no means a quick reader of character, Lady Charlotte nevertheless perceived that the man who

spoke in this fashion, after what she had confessed, must be sentimentally, if not actually, playing double.

Thus she came to his assistance: 'Are you begging permission to break our engagement?'

'At least, whatever I do get I must beg for now!' He took refuge adroitly in a foolish reply, and it served him. That he had in all probability lost his chance by the method he had adopted, and by sentimentalizing at the wrong moment, was becoming evident, notwithstanding. In a sort of despair he attempted comfort by critically examining her features, and trying to suit them to one or other of the numerous models of Love that a young man carries about with him. Her eyes met his, and even as he was deciding against her on almost every point, the force of their frankness held his judgement in suspense.

'The world is rather harsh upon women in these cases,' she said, turning her head a little, with a conscious droop of the eyelids. 'I will act as if we had an equal burden between us. On my side, what you have to tell me does not alter me. I have known it. . . . You see that I am just the same to you. For your part, you are free, if you please. That is fair dealing, is it not?'

The gentleman's mechanical assent provoked the lady's smile.

But Wilfrid was torn between a profound admiration of her and the galling reflection that until she had named the engagement, none had virtually existed which diplomacy, aided by time and accident, might not have stopped.

'You must be aware that I am portionless,' she continued. 'I have—let me name the sum—a thousand pounds. It is some credit to me that I have had it five years and not spent it. Some men would think that a

quality worth double the amount. Well, you will make up your mind to my bringing you no money ;—I have a few jewels. *En revanche*, my habits are not expensive. I like a horse, but I can do without one. I like a large house, and can live in a small one. I like a French cook, and can dine comfortably off a single dish. Society is very much to my taste ; I shall indulge it when I am whipped at home.'

Wilfrid took her hand and pressed his lips to the fingers, keeping his face ponderingly down. He was again so divided that the effort to find himself absorbed all his thinking faculties.

At last he muttered : 'A lieutenant's pay ! '—expecting her to reply, 'We can wait,' as girls do that find it pleasant to be adored by curates. Then might follow a meditative pause—a short gaze at her, from which she could have the option of reflecting that to wait is not the privilege of those who have lived to acquire patience. The track he marked out was clever in a poor way ; perhaps it was not positively unkind to instigate her to look at her age : but though he read character shrewdly, and knew hers pretty accurately, he was himself too much of a straw at the moment to be capable of leading-moves.

'We can make up our minds, without great difficulty, to regard the Lieutenant's pay as nothing at all,' was Lady Charlotte's answer. 'You will enter the Diplomatic Service. My interest alone could do that. If we are married, there would be plenty to see the necessity for pushing us. I don't know whether you could keep the lieutenancy ; you might. I should not like you to quit the Army : an opening might come in it. There 's the Indian Staff—the Persian Mission : they like soldiers for those Eastern posts. But we must take what we can get. We should, anyhow, live abroad, where in

the matter of money society is more sensible. We should be able to choose our own, and advertize tea, *brioche*, and conversation in return for the delicacies of the season.'

'But you, Charlotte—you could never live that life!' Wilfrid broke in, the contemplation of her plain sincerity diminishing him to himself. 'It would drag you down too horribly!'

'Remorse at giving tea in return for dinners and Balls?'

'Ah! there are other things to consider.'

She blushed unwontedly.

Something, lighted by the blush, struck him as very feminine and noble.

'Then I may flatter myself that you love me?' he whispered.

'Do you not see?' she rejoined. 'My project is nothing but a whim—a whim.'

The divided man saw himself whole, if not happy, in the ranks of Diplomacy, with a resolute, frank, faithful woman (a lady of title) loving him, to back him. Fortune shone ahead, and on the road he saw where his deficiencies would be filled up by her. She was firm and open—he irresolute and self-involved. Animal courage both possessed. Their differences were so extreme that they met where they differed. It struck him specially now that she would be like Day to his spirit in continued intercourse. Young as he was, he had wisdom to know the right meaning of the word 'helpmate.' It was as if the head had dealt the heart a blow, saying, 'See here the lady thou art to serve.' But the heart was a surly rebel. Lady Charlotte was fully justified in retorting upon his last question: 'I think I also should ask, do you love me? It is not absolutely imperative for the occasion or for the catastrophe, I merely ask for what is called information.'

And yet, despite her flippancy, which was partly designed to relieve his embarrassment, her hand was moist and her eyes were singularly watchful.

'You who sneer at love!' He gave a musical murmur.

'Not at all. I think it a very useful part of the capital to begin the married business upon.'

'You unsay your own words.'

'Not "absolutely imperative," I think I said, if I remember rightly.'

'But I take the other view, Charlotte.'

'You imagine that there must be a little bit of love.'

'There should be no marriage without it.'

'On both sides?'

'At least, if not on both sides, *one* should bring such a love.'

'Enough for two! So, then, we are not to examine your basket?'

Touched by the pretty thing herein implied, he squeezed her hand.

'This is the answer?' said she.

'Can you doubt me?'

She rose from her seat. 'Oh! if you talk in that style, I really am tempted to say that I do. Are there men-women and women-men? My dear Wilfrid, have we changed parts to-night?'

His quickness in retrieving a false position, outwardly, came to his aid. He rose likewise, and, while perfecting the minor details of an easy attitude against the mantelpiece, said: 'I am so constituted, Charlotte, that I can't talk of my feelings in a business tone; and I avoid that subject unless . . . You spoke of a basket just now. Well, I confess I can't bring mine into the market and bawl out that I have so many pounds' weight of the required material. Would a man go to the market

at all if he had nothing to dispose of ? In plain words—since my fault appears to be, according to your reading, in the opposite direction—should I be here if my sentiments could not reply eloquently to your question ? '

This very common masterpiece of cunning from a man in a corner, which suggests with so persuasive an air that he has ruled his actions up to the very moment when he faces you, and had almost preconceived the present occasion, rather won Lady Charlotte ; or it seemed to, or the scene had been too long for her vigilance.

' In the affirmative ? ' she whispered, coming nearer to him.

She knew that she had only to let her right shoulder slip under his left arm, and he would very soon proclaim himself her lover as ardently as might be wished. Why did she hesitate to touch the blood of the man ? It was her fate never to have her great heart read aright. Wilfrid could not know that generosity rather than iciness restrained her from yielding that one unknown kiss which would have given the final spring to passion in his breast. He wanted the justification of his senses, and to run headlong blindly. Had she nothing of a woman's instinct ?

' In the affirmative ! ' was his serene reply.

' That means, " Yes." ' Her tone had become pleasantly soft.

' Yes, that means " Yes," ' said he.

She shut her eyes, murmuring, ' How happy are those who hear that they are loved ! ' and opening them, all her face being red, ' Say it ! ' she pleaded. Her fingers fell upon his wrist. ' I have this weakness, Wilfrid ; I wish to hear you say it.'

The flush of her face, and tremour of her fingers, told

of an unimagined agitation hardly to be believed, though seen and felt. Yet, still some sign, some shade of a repulsion in her figure, kept him as far from her as any rigid rival might have stipulated for.

The interrogation to the attentive heavens was partially framed in his mind, 'How can I tell this woman I love her, without . . .' without putting his arm about her waist, and demonstrating it satisfactorily to himself as well as to her? In other words, not so framed, 'How, without that frenzy which shall make me forget whether it be so or not?'

He remained in his attitude, incapable of moving or speaking, but fancying, that possibly, he was again to catch a glimpse of the vanished mountain nymph, sweet Liberty. Her woman's instinct warmed more and more, until, if she did not quite apprehend his condition, she at least understood that the pause was one preliminary to a man's feeling himself a fool.

'Dear Wilfrid,' she whispered, 'you think you are doubted. I want to be certain that you think you have met the right woman to help you, in me?'

He passed through the loophole here indicated, and breathed.

'Yes, Charlotte, I am sure of that. If I could be only half as worthy! You are full of courage and unselfishness, and, I could swear, faithful as steel.'

'Thank you—not dogs,' she laughed. 'I like steel. I hope to be a good sword in your hand, my knight—or shield, or whatever purpose you put me to.'

She went on smiling, and seeming to draw closer to him and throw down defences.

'After all, Wilfrid, the task of loving your good piece of steel won't be less thoroughly accomplished because you find it difficult. Sir, I do not admit any protestation. Handsome faces, musical voices, sly manners, and

methods that I choose not to employ, make the business easy to men.'

'Who discover that the lady is not steel,' said Wilfrid. 'Need she, in any case, wear so much there?'

He pointed, flittingly as it were, with his little finger to the slope of her neck.

She turned her wrist, touching the spot: 'Here? You have seen, then, that it is something worn?'

There followed a delicious interplay of eyes. Who would have thought that hers could be sweet and mean so much?

'It *is* something worn, then? And thrown aside for me only, Charlotte?'

'For him who loves me,' she said.

'For me!'

'For him who loves me,' she repeated.

'Then it is for me!'

She had moved back, showing a harder figure, or the 'I love you, love you!' would have sounded with force. It came, though not so vehemently as might have been, to the appeal of a soft fixed look.

'Yes, I love you, Charlotte; you know that I do.'

'You love me?'

'Yes.'

'Say it.'

'I love you! Dead, inanimate Charlotte, I love you!'

She threw out her hand as one would throw a bone to a dog.

'My living, breathing, noble Charlotte,' he cried, a little bewitched, 'I love you with all my heart!'

It surprised him that her features should be gradually expressing less delight.

'With *all* your heart?'

'Could I give you a part?'

'It is done, sometimes,' she said, mock-sadly. Then,

in her original voice: 'Good. I never credited that story of you and the girl Emilia. I suppose what people say is a lie?'

Her eyes, in perfect accordance with the tone she had adopted, set a quiet watch on him.

'Who says it?' he thundered, just as she anticipated.

'It 's not true?'

'Not true!—how can it be true?'

'You never loved Emilia Belloni?—don't love her now?—do *not* love her now? If you have ever said that you love Emilia Belloni, recant, and you are forgiven; and then go, for I think I hear Georgiana below. Quick! I am not acting. It 's earnest. The word, if you please, as you are a gentleman. Tell me, because I have heard tales. I have been perplexed about you. I am sure you 're a manly fellow, who would never have played tricks with a girl you were bound to protect; but you might have—pardon the slang—*spooned*,—who knows? You might have been in love with her downright. No harm, even if a trifle foolish; but in the present case, set my mind at rest. Quick! There are both my hands. Take them, press them, and speak.'

The two hands were taken, but his voice was not so much at command. No image of Emilia rose in his mind to reproach him with the casting over of his heart's dear mistress, but a blind struggle went on. It seemed that he could do what he dared not utter. The folly of lips more loyal than the spirit touched his lively perception; and as the hot inward struggle, masked behind his softly-playing eyes, had reduced his personal consciousness so that if he spoke from his feeling there was a chance of his figuring feebly, he put on his ever-ready other self:

'Categorically I reply: Have I loved Miss Emilia Belloni?—No. Do I?—No. Do I love Charlotte

Chillingworth ?—Yes, ten thousand times! And now let Britomart disarm.'

He sought to get his reward by gentle muscular persuasion. Her arms alone yielded: and he judged from the angle of the neck, ultra-sharp though it was, that her averted face might be her form of exhibiting maidenly reluctance, feminine modesty. Suddenly the fingers in his grasp twisted, and not being at once released, she turned round to him.

'For God's sake, spare the girl!'

Emilia stood in the doorway.

CHAPTER XXXVII

EMILIA'S FLIGHT

A KNOCK at Merthyr's chamber called him out while he sat writing to Marini on the national business. He heard Georgiana's voice begging him to come to her quickly. When he saw her face the stain of tears was there.

'Anything the matter with Charlotte?' was his first question.

'No. But, come: I will tell you on the way. Do not look at me.'

'No personal matter of any kind?'

'Oh, no! I can have none'; and she took his hand for a moment.

They passed into the dark windy street smelling of the sea.

'Emilia is here,' said Georgiana. 'I want you to persuade her—you will have influence with her. Oh, Merthyr! my darling brother! I thank God I love my

brother with all my love! What a dreadful thing it is for a woman to love a man.'

'I suppose it is, while she has nothing else to do,' said Merthyr. 'How did she come?—why?'

'If you had seen Emilia to-night, you would have felt that the difference is absolute.' Georgiana dealt first with the general case. 'She came, I think, by some appointment.'

'Also just as absolute between her and her sex,' he rejoined, controlling himself, not to be less cool. 'What has happened?'

Georgiana pointed to the hotel whither their steps were bent. 'That is where Charlotte sleeps. Her going there was not a freak; she had an object. She wished to cure Emilia of her love for Mr. Wilfrid Pole. Emilia had come down to see him. Charlotte put her in an adjoining room to hear him say—what I presume they do say when the fit is on them! Was it not singular folly?'

It was a folly that Merthyr could not understand in his friend Charlotte. He said so, and then he gave a kindly sad exclamation of Emilia's name.

'You do pity her still!' cried Georgiana, her heart leaping to hear it expressed so simply.

'Why, what other feeling can I have?' said he unsuspiciously.

'No, dear Merthyr,' she replied; and only by her tone he read the guilty little rejoicing in her heart, marvelling at jealousy that could twist so straight a stem as his sister's spirit. This had taught her, who knew nothing of love, that a man loving does not pity in such a case.

'I hope you will find her here': Georgiana hurried her steps. 'Say anything to comfort her. I will have her with me, and try and teach her what self-control

means, and how it is to be won. If ever she can act on the stage as she spoke to-night, she will be a great dramatic genius. She was transformed. She uses strange forcible expressions that one does not hear in every-day life. She crushed Charlotte as if she had taken her up in one hand, and without any display at all: no gesture, or spasm. I noticed, as they stood together, that there is such a contrast between animal courage and imaginative fire.'

'Charlotte could meet a great occasion, I should think,' said Merthyr; and, taking his sister by the elbow: 'You speak as if you had observed very coolly. Did Emilia leave you so cold? Did she seem to speak from head, not from heart?'

'No; she moved me—poor child! Only, how humiliating to hear her beg for love!—before us.'

Merthyr smiled: 'I thought it must be the woman's feeling that would interfere to stop a natural emotion. Is it true—or did I not *see* that certain eyes were red just now?'

'That was for him,' said Georgiana, hastily. 'I am sure that no man has stood in such a position as he did. To see a man made publicly ashamed, and bearing it. I have never had to endure so painful a sight.'

'To stand between two women, claimed by both, like Solomon's babe! A man might as well at once have Solomon's judgement put into execution upon him. You wept for him! Do you know, Georgey, that charity of your sex, which makes you cry at any "affecting situation," must have been designed to compensate to us for the severities of Providence.'

'No, Merthyr'; she arrested his raillery. 'Do I ever cry? But I thought—if it had been my brother! and almost at the thought I felt the tears rush at my eyelids, as if the shame had been mine.'

'The probability of its not being your brother seemed distant at the moment,' said Merthyr, with his half-melancholy smile. 'Tell me—I can conjure up the scene: but tell me whether you saw more passions than one in her face?'

'Emilia's? No. Her face reminded me of the sombre—that dull glow of a fire that you leave burning in the grate late on winter nights. Was that natural? It struck me that her dramatic instinct was as much alive as her passion.'

'Had she been clumsy, would you not have been less suspicious of her? And if she had only shown the accustomed northern *retenue*, and merely looked all that she had to say—"preserved her dignity"—our womanly critic would have been completely satisfied.'

'But, Merthyr, to parade her feelings, and then to go on appealing!'

'On the principle that she ought to be ashamed of them, she was wrong.'

'If you had heard her utter abandonment!'

'I can believe that she did not blush.'

'It seems to me to belong to those excesses that prompt—that are in themselves a species of suicide.'

'Love is said to be the death of self.'

'No; but I must use cant words, Merthyr; I do wish to see modesty. Yes, I know I must be right.'

'There is very little of it to be had in a tropical storm.'

'You admit, then, that this sort of love is a storm that passes?'

'It passes, I hope.'

'But where is your defence of her now?'

'Have I defended her? I need not try. A man has deceived her, and she doesn't think it possible; and has said so, I presume. When she sees it, she will be quieter than most. She will not reproach him subse-

quently. Here is the hotel, and that must be Charlotte's room, if I may judge by the lights. What pranks will she always be playing! We seem to have brought new elements into the little town. Do you remember Bergamo the rainy night the Austrian trooped out of Milan?—one light that was a thousand in the twinkling of an eye!'

Having arrived, he ran hastily up to the room, expecting to find the three; but Lady Charlotte was alone, sitting in her chair with knotted arms. 'Ah, Merthyr!' she said, 'I 'm sorry you should have been disturbed. I perceive what Georgey's leaving the room meant. I suppose the hotel people are used to yachting-parties.' And then, not seeing any friendly demonstration on his part, she folded her arms in another knot. Georgiana asked where Emilia was. Lady Charlotte replied that Emilia had gone, and then Wilfrid had followed her, one minute later, to get her into shelter somewhere. 'Or put penknives out of her way. I am rather fatigued with a scene, Merthyr. I never had an idea before of what your Southern women were. One plays decidedly second to them while the fit lasts. Of course, you have a notion that I planned the whole of the absurd business. This is the case:—I found the girl on the beach: she follows him everywhere, which is bad for her reputation, because in this climate people suspect positive reasons for that kind of female devotedness. So, to put an end to it—really for her own sake, quite as much as anything else—am I a monster of insensibility, Merthyr?—I made her swear an oath: one must be a point above wild animals to feel that to be binding, however! I made her swear to listen and remain there silent till I opened the door to set her at liberty. She consented—gave her word solemnly. I calculated that she might faint, and fixed her in an arm-chair. Was that cruel?

Merthyr, you have called me Austrian more than once ; but, upon my honour, I wanted her to get over her delusion comfortably. I thought she would have kept the oath, I confess ; she looked up like a child when she was making it. You have heard the rest from Georgey. I must say the situation was rather hard on Wilfrid. If *he* blames me it will be excuseable, though what I did plan was to save him from a situation somewhat worse. So now you know the whole, Merthyr. Commence your lecture. Make me a martyr to the sorrows of Italy once more.'

Merthyr took her wrist, feeling the quick pulse, and dropped it. She was effectually humbled by this direct method of dealing with her secret heart. After some commonplace remarks had passed, she herself urged him to send out men in search for Emilia. Before he went, she murmured a soft 'Forgive me.' The pressure of her fingers was replied to, but the words were not spoken.

'There,' she cried to Georgiana, 'I have offended the only man for whose esteem I care one particle ! Devote yourself to your friends ! '

'How ?—"devote yourself ! " ' murmured Georgiana, astonished.

'Do you think I should have got into this hobble if I hadn't wished to serve some one else ? You must have seen that Merthyr has a sentimental sort of fondness —call it passion—for this girl. She 's his Italy in the flesh. Is there a more civilized man in the world than Merthyr ? So he becomes fascinated by a savage. We all play the game of opposites—or like to, and no woman in his class will ever catch him. I couldn't have believed that he was touched by a girl, but for two or three recent indications. You must have noticed that he has given up reading others, and he objected the other day to a

responsible office which would have thrown him into her neighbourhood alone. These are unmistakeable signs in Merthyr, though he has never been in love, and doesn't understand his case a bit. Tell me, do you think it impossible ? '

Georgiana answered dryly, ' You have fallen into a fresh mistake.'

' Exactly. Then let me rescue you from a similar fatality, Georgey. If your eyes are bandaged now . . .'

' Are you going to be devoted to me also, Charlotte ? '

' I believe I 'm a miracle of devotion,' said the lady, retiring into indifferent topics upon that phrase. She had at any rate partially covered the figure of ridicule presented to her feminine imagination by the aspect of her fair self exposed in public contention with one of her sex—and for a man. It was enough to make her pulse and her brain lively. On second thoughts, too, it *had* struck her that she might be serving Merthyr in disengaging Emilia ; and undoubtedly she served Georgiana by giving her a warning. Through this silliness went the current of a clear mind, nevertheless. The lady's heart was justified in crying out : ' What would I not abandon for my friend in his need ? ' Meantime her battle in her own behalf looked less pleasing by the light of new advantages. The question recurred : ' Shall I care to win at all ? ' She had to force the idea of a violent love to excuse her proceedings. To get up any flame whatsoever, an occasional blast of jealousy had to be called for. Jealousy was a quality she could not admit as possible to her. So she acted on herself by an agent she repudiated, and there was no help for it. Had Wilfrid loved her the woman's heart was ready. It was ready with a trembling tenderness, softer and deeper than a girl's. For Charlotte would have felt :

'With this love that I have craved for, you give me life.' And she would have thanked him for both, exultingly, to feel: 'I can repay you as no girl could do'; though she had none of the rage of love to give; as it was, she thought conscientiously that she could help him. She liked him: his peculiar suppleness of a growing mind, his shrouded sensibility, in conjunction with his reputation for an evidently quite reliable prompt courage, and the mask he wore, which was to her transparent, pleased her and touched her fancy.

Nor was he so vain of his person as to make him seem like a boy to her. He affected maturity. He could pass a mirror on his right or his left without an abstracted look over either shoulder;—a poor example, but worth something to a judge of young men. Indeed, had she chosen from a crowd, the choice would have been one of his age. She was too set for an older man; but a youth aspiring to be older than he was; whose faults she saw and forgave; whose merits supplied two or three of her own deficiencies; whom her station might help to elevate; to whom she might come as a benefactress; feeling so while she accomplished her own desire;—such a youth was everything to her, as she awoke to discover after having played with him a season. If she lost him, what became of her? Even if she had rejoiced in a mother to plot and play,—to bait and snare for her, her time was slipping, and the choosers among her class were wary. Her spirit, besides, was high and elective. It was gradually stooping to nature, but would never have bowed to a fool, or, save under protest, to one who gave all. On Wilfrid she had fixed her mind: so, therefore, she bore the remembrance of the recent scene without much fretting at her burdens; —the more, that Wilfrid had in no way shamed her; and the more, that the heat of Emilia's love played

round him and illumined him. This borrowing of the passion of another is not uncommon.

At daybreak Mrs. Chump was abroad. She had sat up for Wilfrid almost through the night. 'Oh! the arr'stocracy!' she breathed exclamations, as she swept along the esplanade. 'I'll be killed and murdered if I tell a word.' Meeting Captain Gambier, she fell into a great agitation, and explained it as an anxiety she entertained for Wilfrid; when, becoming entangled in the mesh of questions, she told all she knew, and nearly as much as she suspected: which fatal step to retrieve, she entreated his secresy. Adela was now seen fluttering hastily up the walk, fresh as a creature of the sea-wave. Before Mrs. Chump could summon her old wrath of yesterday, she was kissed, and to the arch interrogation as to what she had done with this young lady's brother, replied by telling the tale of the night again. Mrs. Chump was ostentatiously caressed into a more comfortable opinion of the world's morality, for the nonce. Invited by them to breakfast at the hotel, she hurried back to her villa for a flounced dress and a lace cap of some pretensions, while they paced the shore.

'See what may be said!' Adela's countenance changed as she muttered it. 'Thought, would be enough,' she added, shuddering.

'Yes; if one is off guard—careless,' the captain assented flowingly.

'Can one in earnest be other than careless? I shall walk on that line up to the end. Who makes me deviate is my enemy!'

The playful little person balanced herself to make one foot follow the other along a piece of washed grey rope on the shingle. Soon she had to stretch out her hand for help, and the captain at full arm's length conducted her to the final knot.

'Arrived safe!' she said, smiling.

'But not disengaged,' he rejoined, in similar style.

'Please!' She doubled her elbow to give a little tug for her fingers.

'No.' He pressed them tighter.

'Pray?'

'No.'

'Must I speak to somebody else to get me released?'

'Would you?'

'Must I?'

'Thank heaven, he is not yet in existence!'

'Husband' being implied. Games of this sweet sort are warranted to carry little people as far as they may go swifter than any other invention of lively Satan.

The yachting party, including Mrs. Chump, were at the breakfast-table, and that dumb guest had done all the blushing for Lady Charlotte, when Wilfrid entered, neat, carefully brushed, and with ready answers, though his face could put on no fresh colours. To Mrs. Chump he bent, passing, and was pushed away and drawn back. 'Your eyes!' she whispered.

'My—yeyes!' went Wilfrid, in school-boy style; and she, who rarely laughed, was struck by his humorous skill, saying to Sir Twickenham, beside her: 'He 's as cunnin' as a lord!'

Sir Twickenham expressed his ignorance of lords having usurped priority in that department. Frightened by his portentous parliamentary phraseology, she remained tolerably demure till the sitting was over: now sidling in her heart to the sins of the great, whom anon she angrily reproached. Her principal idea was, that as the world was discovered to be so wicked, they were all in a boat going to perdition, and it would be as well to jump out immediately: but while so resolving, she hung upon Lady Charlotte's looks and little speeches, altogether

seduced by so fresh and frank a sinner. If safe from temptation, here was the soul of a woman in great danger of corruption.

'Among the aristocracy,' thought Mrs. Chump, 'it 's just the male that hangs his head, and the female struts and is sprightly.' The contrast between Lady Charlotte and Wilfrid (who when he ceased to act outrageously, sat like a man stricken by a bolt), produced this reflection: and in spite of her disastrous vision of the fate of the boat they were in, Mrs. Chump owned to the intoxication of gliding smoothly—gliding on the rapids.

The breakfast was coming to an end, when Braintop's name was sent in to Mrs. Chump. She gave a cry of motherly compassion for Braintop, and began to relate the little deficiencies of his temper, while, as it were, simmering on her seat to go to him. Wilfrid sent out word for him to appear, which he did, unluckily for himself, even as Mrs. Chump wound up the public description of his character by remarking: 'He 's just the opposite of a lord, now, in everything.' Braintop stood bowing like the most faithful confirmation of an opinion ever seen. He looked the victim of fatigue, in the bargain. A light broke on Mrs. Chump. 'I 'll never forgive myself, ye poor gentle heart, to throw pens and pen-wipers at ye, that did your best, poor boy! What have ye been doin'? and why didn't ye return, and not go hoppin' about all night like a young kangaroo, as they say they do? Have ye read the "Arcana of Nature and Science," ma'am?'

The Hon. Mrs. Bayruffle, thus abruptly addressed, observed that she had not, and was it an amusing book?

'Becas it 'll open your mind,' pursued Mrs. Chump; 'and there, he 's eatin'! and when a man takes to eatin', ye 'll naver have anny fear about his abouts. And if ye read the "Arcana of Nature and Science," ma'am, ye 'll

first feel that ye 've gone half mad. For it contains averything in the world ; and ye 'll read ut ten times all through, and not remember five lines runnin' ! Oh, it 's a dreadful book : and that 's the book to read to your husband when he 's got a fit o' the gout. He 's got nothin' to do but swallow knolludge then. Now, Mr. Braintop, don't stop, but tell me as ye go on what ye did with yourself all night.'

A slight hesitation in Braintop caused her to cross-examine him rigidly, suggesting that he might not dare to tell, and he, exercising some self-command, adopted narrative as the less ignominious form of confession. No one save Mrs. Chump listened to him until he mentioned the name Miss Belloni ; and then it was curious to see the steadiness with which certain eyes, feigning abstraction, fixed in his direction. He had met Emilia on the outskirts of the town, and unable to persuade her to take shelter anywhere, had walked on with her in dead silence through the night, to the third station of the railway for London.

' Is this a mad person ? ' asked the Hon. Mrs. Bayruffle.

Adela shrugged. ' A genius.'

' Don't eat with the tips of your teeth, like a bird, Mr. Braintop, for no company minds your eatin',' cried Mrs. Chump, angrily and encouragingly ; ' and this little Belloni—my belief is that she came after you ; and what have ye done with her ? '

It was queerly worried out of Braintop, who was trying his best all the time to be obedient to Wilfrid's direct eye, that the two wanderers by night had lost themselves in lanes, refreshed themselves with purloined apples from the tree at dawn, obtained a draught of morning milk, with a handful of damsons apiece, and that nothing would persuade Emilia to turn back from the route to London. Braintop bit daintily at his toast, unwilling

to proceed under the discouraging expression of Wilfrid's face, and the meditative silence of two or three others. The discovery was forcibly extracted that Emilia had no money ;—that all she had in her possession was sevenpence and a thimble ; and that he, Braintop, had but a few shillings, which she would not accept.

'And what has become of her ?' was asked.

Braintop stated that she had returned to London, and, blushing, confessed that he had given her his return ticket.

Georgiana here interposed to save him from the awful encomiums of Mrs. Chump, by desiring to know whether Emilia seemed unhappy or distressed. Braintop's spirited reply, 'Not at all,' was corrected to : 'She did not cry' ; and further modified : 'That is, she called out sharply when I whistled an opera tune.'

Lady Charlotte put a stop to the subject by rising pointedly. Watch in hand, she questioned the ladies as to their occupations, and told them what time they had to dispose of. Then Baynes, captain of the yacht, heard to be outside, was summoned in. He pronounced doubtfully about the weather, but admitted that there was plenty of wind, and if the ladies did not mind it a little fresh, he was sure he did not. Wind was favourable for the island head-quarters of the yacht. 'We 'll see who gets there first,' she said to Wilfrid, and the company learnt that Wilfrid was going to other head-quarters on special business, whereupon there followed chatter and exclamations. Wilfrid quickly explained that his father's condition called him away imperiously. To Adela and Mrs. Chump, demanding peculiar personal explanations, he gave reassuring reasons separately, aside. Mrs. Chump understood that this was merely his excuse to get away, that he might see her safe to Brookfield. Adela only required a look and a gesture. Merthyr

and Georgiana likewise spoke expected adieux, as did Sir Twickenham, who parted company in his own little yawl. Lady Charlotte, with her head over a map, and one hand arrangeing an eyeglass, hastily nodded them off, scarcely looking at them. She allowed herself to be diverted from this study for an instant by the unbefitting noise made by Adela for the loss of her brother; not that she objected to the noise particularly (it was modulated and delicate in tone), but that she could not understand it. Seeing Sir Twickenham, however, in a leave-taking attitude, she uttered an easy 'Oh!' to herself, and diligently recommenced spying at ports and harbours, and following the walnut thumb of Baynes on the map. All seemed to be perfectly correct in the arrangements. To go to London was Wilfrid's thought; and the rest were almost as much occupied with their own ideas. Captain Gambier received their semi-ironical congratulations and condolences incident to the man who is left alone in the charge of sweet ladies; and the Hon. Mrs. Bayruffle remarked, that she supposed ten hours not a long period of time, though her responsibility was onerous.

'Lady Gosstre is at the island,' said Lady Charlotte, to show where it might end, if she pleased. Within an hour the yacht was flying for the island with a full Western breeze: and Mrs. Chump and Wilfrid were speeding to Brookfield, as the latter permitted her to imagine. Braintop realized the fruits of the sacrifice of his return ticket by facing Mrs. Chump in the train. Merthyr had telegraphed to Marini to meet Emilia at the station in London, and instructed Braintop to deliver a letter for her at Marini's house. To Marini he wrote: 'Let Giulia guard her as no one but a woman can in such a case. By this time Giulia will know her value. There is dangerous stuff in her now, and my anxiety is

very great. Have you seen what a nature it is? You have not alluded to her beyond answers to instructions, but her character cannot have escaped you. I am never mistaken in my estimates of Italian and Cymric blood. Singularly, too, she is part Welsh on the mother's side, to judge by the name. Leave her mind entirely free till it craves openly for some counteraction. Her Italy and her music will not do. Let them be. My fear is that you have seen too clearly what a daughter of Italy I have found for you. But whatever you put up now to distract her, you sacrifice. My good Marini! bear that in mind. It will be a disgust in her memory, and I wish her to love her country and her Art when she recovers. So we treat the disease, dear friend. Let your Italy have no sorrows for her ears till the storm within is tranquil. I am with you speedily.'

Marini's reply said: 'Among all the things we have to thank our Merthyr for, this treasure, if it is not the greatest he has given to us, makes us grateful the most. We met her at the station. Ah! there was an elbow when she gave her hand. She thought to be alone, and started, and hated, till Giulia smothered her face. And there was *dead* fire in the eyes, which is powder when you spring it. We go with her to her new lodging, and the track is lost. This is your wish? It is pitching new camps to avoid the enemy. But so! a man takes this disease and his common work at once: of a woman—she is all the disease, till it is extinct, or she! What is this disease but a silly, a senseless waste? Giulia—woman that she is!—will not call it so. See her eyes doze and her voice go a soft buzz when she speaks it! As a dove of the woods! That it almost makes it sweet to me! Yes, a daughter of Italy! So Giulia has been:—will be? I know not! So will this your Emilia be in the time that comes to the young people, she has this, as you say,

malady very strong—*ma, ogni male ha la sua ricetta ;* I can say it of persons. Of nations to think my heart is as an infidel—very heavy. Ah ! till I turn to you—who revive to the thought, as you were an army of deliverance. For you are Hope. You know not Despair. You are Hope. And you love as myself a mother whose son you are not ! "Oh !" is Giulia's cry, "will our Italy reward him with a daughter ?"—the noblest that we have. Yes, for she would be Italian always through you. We pray that you may not get old too soon, before she grows for you and is found, only that you may know in her our love. See ! I am brought to talk this language. The woman is in me.'

Merthyr said, as he read this, 'I could wish no better.' His feeling for Emilia waxed toward a self-avowal as she advanced to womanhood ; and the last stage of it had struck among trembling strings in the inmost chambers of his heart. That last stage of it—her passionate claiming of Wilfrid before two women, one her rival—slept like a covered furnace within him. 'Can you remember none of her words ?' he said more than once to Georgiana, who replied : 'I would try to give you an idea of what she said, but I might as well try to paint lightning.'

'"My lover" ?' suggested Merthyr.

'Oh, yes ; that she said.'

'It sounded oddly to your ears ?'

'Very, indeed.'

'What more ?'

'——did she say, do you mean ?'

'Is my poor sister ashamed to repeat it ?'

'I would repeat anything that would give you *pleasure* to hear.'

'Sometimes pain, you know, is sweet.'

Little by little, and with a contest at each step, Georgi-

ana coasted the conviction that her undivided reign was over. Then she judged Emilia by human nature's hardest standard : the measure of the qualities brought as usurper and successor. Unconsciously she placed herself in the seat of one who had fulfilled all the great things demanded of a woman for Merthyr, and it seemed to her that Emilia exercised some fatal fascination, girl though she was, to hurl her from that happy sovereignty.

But Emilia's worst crime before the arraigning lady was that Wilfrid had cast her off. Female justice, therefore, said : 'You must be unworthy of my brother' ; and female delicacy thought : 'You have been soiled by a previous history.' She had pitied Wilfrid : now she held him partially blameless : and while love was throbbing in many pulses all round her, the man she had seen besieged by passionate love, touched her cold imagination with a hue of fire, as Winter dawn lies on a frosty field. She almost conceived what this other, not sisterly, love might be ; though not as its victim, by any means. She became, as she had never before been, spiritually tormented and restless. The thought framed itself that Charlotte and Wilfrid were not, by any law of selection, to match. What mattered it ? Simply that it in some way seemed to increase the merits of one of the two. The task, moreover, of avoiding to tease her brother was made easier to her by flying to this new refuge of mysterious reflection. At times she poured back the whole flood of her heart upon Merthyr, and then in alarm at the host of little passions that grew cravingly alive in her, she turned her thoughts to Wilfrid again ; and so, till they turned wittingly to him. That this host of little passions will invariably surround a false great one, she learnt by degrees, by having to quell them and rise out of them. She knew that now she occasionally

forced her passion for Merthyr ; but what nothing could teach her was, that she did so to eject another's image. On the contrary, her confession would have been : 'Voluntarily I dwell upon that other, that my love for Merthyr may avoid excess.' To such a state of clearness much self-questioning brought her : but her blood was as yet unwarmed ; and that is a condition fostering self-deception as much as when it rages.

Madame Marini wrote to ask whether Emilia might receive the visits of a Sir Purcell Barrett, whom they had met, and whom Emilia called her friend ; adding : 'The other gentleman has called at our old lodgings three times. The last time our landlady says, he wept. Is it an Englishman, really ? '

Merthyr laughed at this, remarking : 'Charlotte is not so vigilant, after all.'

'He wept,' Georgiana thought and remembered the cold self-command that his face had shown when Emilia claimed him, and his sole reply was, 'I am engaged to this lady,' designating Lady Charlotte. Now, too, some of Emilia's phrases took life in her memory. She studied them, thinking over them, as if a voice of nature had spoken. Less and less it seemed to her that a woman need feel shame to utter them. She interpreted this as her growth of charity for a girl so violently stricken with love. 'In such a case, the more she says the more is she to be excused ; for nothing but a frenzy of passion could move her to speak so,' thought Georgiana. Accepting the words, and sanctioning the passion, the person of him who had inspired it stood magnified in its light. She believed that if he had played with the girl, he repented, and the idea of a man shedding tears burnt to her heart.

Merthyr and Georgiana remained in Devonshire till

a letter from Madame Marini one morning told them that Emilia had disappeared.

'You delayed too long to go to her, Merthyr,' said his sister, astonishing him. 'I understand why; but you may trust to time and scorn chance too much. Let us go now and find her, if it is not too late.'

Marini met them at the station in London, and they heard that Wilfrid had discovered Marini's new abode, and had called there that morning. 'I had my eye on him. It was not a piece of love-play,' said Marini: 'and to-day she should have seen my Chief, which would have cured her of sis pestilence of a love, to give her sublime thoughts. Do you love her, Miss Ford? Aha! it will be Christian names in Italy again.'

'I like her very much,' said Georgiana; 'but I confess it mystifies me to see you all so excited about her. It must be some attraction possessed by her—what, I cannot say. I like her, certainly.'

'*Figlia mia!* she is an element—she is fire!' said Marini. 'My sought, when our Mertyr brought her, was, it is Italy he sees in her face—her voice—name—anysing! And a day passed, and I could not lose her for my own sake, and felt a somesing, too! She is half man.'

'A singular reason for an attraction.' Georgiana smiled.

'She is not,' Marini put out his fingers like claws to explain, while his eyelashes met over his eyes—'she is not what man has made of your sex; and she is brave of heart.'

'Can you possibly tell what such a child can be?' questioned Georgiana, almost irritably.

Marini did not reply to her.

'A face to find a home in!—eh, Mertyr?'

'Let 's discover where that face has found a home,'

said Merthyr. 'She is a very plain and unpretending person, if people will not insist upon her being more. This morbid admiration of heroines puts a trifle too much weight upon their shoulders, does it not?'

Georgiana knew that to call Emilia 'child' was to wound the most sensitive nerve in Merthyr's system, if he loved her, and she had determined to try harshly whether he did. Nevertheless, though the expression succeeded, and was designedly cruel, she could not forgive the insincerity of his last speech; craving in truth for confidence as her smallest claim on him now. So, at all the consultations, she acquiesced in any scheme that was proposed; the advertizings and the use of detectives; the communication with Emilia's mother and father; and the callings at suburban concert-rooms. Sir Purcell Barrett frequently called to assist in the discovery. At first he led them to suspect Mr. Pericles; but a trusty Italian playing spy upon that gentleman soon cleared him, and they were more in the dark than ever. It was only when at last Georgiana heard Merthyr, the picture of polished self-possession, giving way to a burst of disappointment in the room before them all: 'Are we sure that she lives?' he cried:—then Georgiana, looking at the firelight over her joined fingers, said:

'But, have you forgotten the serviceable brigade you have in your organ-boys, Marini? If Emilia sees one, be sure she will speak to him.'

'Have I not said she is a General?' Marini pointed at Georgiana with a gleam of his dark eyes, and Merthyr squeezed his sister's hand, thanking her; by which he gave her one whole night of remorse, because she had not spoken earlier.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SHE CLINGS TO HER VOICE

'My voice! I have my voice!'

Emilia had cried it out to herself almost aloud, on the journey from Devon to London. The landscape slipping under her eyes, with flashing grey pools and light silver freshets, little glades, little copses, farms, and meadows rounding away to spires of village churches under blue hills, would not let her sink, heavy as was the spirit within her, and dead to everything as she desired to be. Here, a great strange old oak spread out its arms and seemed to hold the hurrying train a minute. When gone by, Emilia thought of it as a friend, and that there, there, was the shelter and thick darkness she had hoped she might be flying to. Or the reach of a stream was seen, and in the middle of it one fair group of clouds, showing distance beyond distance in colour. Emilia shut her sight, and tried painfully to believe that there were no distances for her. This was an easy task when the train stopped. It was surprising to her then why the people moved. The whistle of the engine and rush of the scenery set her imagination anew upon the horror of being motionless.

'My voice! I have my voice!' The exclamation recurred at intervals, as a quick fear, that bubbled up from blind sensation, of her being utterly abandoned, and a stray thing carrying no light, startled her. Darkness she still had her desire for; but not to be dark in the darkness. She looked back on the recent night as a lake of fire, through which she had plunged; and of all the faculties about her, memory had suffered most, so that

it could recall no images of what had happened, but lay against its black corner a shuddering bundle of nerves. The varying fields and woods and waters offering themselves to her in the swiftness, were as wine dashed to her lips, which could not be dead to it. The wish to be of some worth began a painful quickening movement. At first she could have sobbed with the keen anguish that instantaneously beset her. For—'If I am of worth, who looks on me?' was her outcry, and the darkness she had previously coveted fell with the strength of a mace on her forehead; but the creature's heart struggled further, and by-and-by in despite of her the pulses sprang a clear outlook on hope. It struck through her like the first throb of a sword-cut. She tried to blind herself to it; the face of hope was hateful.

This conflict of the baffled spirit of youth with its forceful flood of being continued until it seemed that Emilia was lifted through the fiery circles into daylight; her last cry being as her first: 'I have my voice!'

Of that which her voice was to achieve for her she never thought. She had no thought of value, but only an eagerness to feel herself possessor of something. Wilfrid had appeared to her to have taken all from her, until the recollection of her voice made her breathe suddenly quick and deep, as one recovering the taste of life.

Despair, I have said before, is a wilful business, common to corrupt blood, and to weak woeful minds: native to the sentimentalist of the better order. The only touch of it that came to Emilia was when she attempted to penetrate to Wilfrid's reason for calling her down to Devon that he might renounce and abandon her. She wanted a reason to make him in harmony with his acts, and she could get none. This made the world look

black to her. But, 'I have my voice!' she said, exhausted by the passion of the night, tearless, and only sensible to pain when the keen swift wind, and the flying squares of field and meadow prompted her nature mysteriously to press for healthy action.

A man opposite to her ventured a remark: 'We 're going at a pretty good pace now, Miss.'

She turned her eyes to him, and the sense of speed was reduced in her at once, she could not comprehend how. Remembering presently that she had not answered him, she said: 'It is because you are going home, perhaps, that you think it fast.'

'No, Miss,' he replied, 'I 'm going to market. They can't put on steam too stiff for me when I 'm bound on business.'

Emilia found it impossible to fathom the sensations of the man, and their common desire for speed bewildered her more. She was relieved when the train was lightened of him. Soon the skirts of red vapour were visible, and when the guard took poor Braintop's return-ticket from her petulant hand, all of the journey that she bore in mind was the sight of a butcher-boy in blue, with a red cap, mounted on a white horse, who rode gallantly along a broad high road, and for whom she had struck out some tune to suit the measure of his gallop.

She accepted her capture by the Marinis more calmly than Merthyr had been led to suppose. The butcher-boy's gallop kept her senses in motion for many hours, and that reckless equestrian embodied the idea of the vivifying pace from which she had dropped. He went slower and slower. By degrees the tune grew dull, and jarred; and then Emilia looked out on the cold grey skies of our autumn, the rain and the fogs, and roaring London filled her ears. So had ended a dream, she thought. She would stand at the window listening to

street-organs, whose hideous discord and clippings and drawls did not madden her, and whose suggestion of a lovely tune rolled out no golden land to her. That treasure of her voice, to which no one in the house made allusion, became indeed a buried treasure.

In the South-western suburb where the Marinis lived, plots of foliage were to be seen, and there were lanes not so black but that they showed the hues of the season. These led to the parks and to noble gardens. Emilia daily went out to keep the dying colours of the year in view, and walked to get among the trees, where, with Madame attendant on her, she sat counting the leaves as each one curved, and slid, and spun to earth, or on a gust of air hosts went aloft; but it always ended in their coming down; Emilia verified that fact repeatedly. However high they flew, the ground awaited them. Madame entertained her with talk of Italy, and Tuscan wine, and Lombard bread, and Turin chocolate. Marini never alluded to his sufferings for the loss of these cruelly interdicted dainties, never! But Madame knew how his exile affected him. And in England the sums one paid for everything! 'One fancies one pays for breath,' said Madame, shivering.

One day the ex-organist of Hillford Church passed before them. Emilia let him go. The day following he passed again, but turned at the end of the alley and simulated astonishment at the appearance of Emilia, as he neared her. They shook hands and talked, while Madame zealously eyed any chance person promenading the neighbourhood. She wrote for instructions concerning this gentleman calling himself Sir Purcell Barrett, and receiving them, she permitted Emilia to invite him to their house. 'He is an Englishman under a rope, ready for heaven,' Madame described him to her husband, who, though more at heart with Englishmen, could not but

admit that this one wore a look that appeared as a prognostication of sadness.

Sir Purcell informed Emilia of his accession to title; and in reply to her 'Are you not glad?' smiled and said that a mockery could scarcely make him glad; indicating nevertheless how feeble the note of poverty was in his grand scale of sorrow. He came to the house and met them in the gardens frequently. With some perversity he would analyze to herself Emilia's spirit of hope, partly perhaps for the sake of probing to what sort of thing it might be in its nature and defences; and, as against an accomplished disputant she made but a poor battle, he injured what was precious to her without himself gaining any good whatever.

'Why, what do you look forward to?' she said wondering, at the end of one of their arguments, as he courteously termed this play of logical foils with a baby.

'Death,' answered the grave gentleman, striding on.

Emilia pitied him, thinking: 'I might feel as he does, if I had not my voice.' Seeing that calamity very remote, she added: 'I should!'

She knew of his position toward Cornelia: that is, she knew as much as he did: for the want of a woman's heart over which to simmer his troubles was urgent within him, and Emilia's, though it lacked experience, was a woman's regarding love. And moreover, she did not weep, but practically suggested his favourable chances, which it was a sad satisfaction to him to prove baseless, and to knock utterly over. The grief in which the soul of a human creature is persistently seeking (since it cannot be thrown off) to clothe itself comfortably, finds in tears an irritating expression of sympathy. Hints of a brighter future are its nourishment. Such embryos are not tenacious of existence, and when de-

stroyed they are succulent food for a space to the moody grief I am describing.

The melancholy gentleman did Emilia this good, that, never appearing to imagine others to know misery save himself, he gave her full occupation apart from the workings of her own mind. As to her case, he might have offered the excuse that she really had nothing of the aspect of a love-sick young lady, and was not a bit sea-green to view, or lamentable in tone. He was sufficiently humane to have felt for any one suffering, and the proof of it is, that the only creature he saw under such an influence he pitied so deplorably, as to make melancholy a habit with him. He fretted her because he would do nothing, and this spectacle of a lover beloved, but consenting to be mystified, consentingly paralyzed :— of a lover beloved !—

'*Does* she love you ? ' said Emilia, beseechingly.

'If the truth is in her, she does,' he returned.

'She has told you she loves you ?—that she loves no one else ? '

'Of this I am certain.'

'Then, why are you downcast ? my goodness ! I would take her by the hand—"Woman ; do you know yourself ? you belong to me ! "—I would say that ; and never let go her hand. That would decide everything. She must come to you then, or you know what it is that means to separate you. My goodness ! I see it so plain ! '

But he declined to look thus low, and stood pitifully smiling :—This spectacle, together with some subtle spur from the talk of love, roused Emilia from her lethargy. The warmth of a new desire struck around her heart. The old belief in her power over Wilfrid joined to a distinct admission that she had for the moment lost him ; and she said, 'Yes ; now, as I am

now, he can abandon me' : but how if he should see her and hear her in that hushed hour when she was to stand as a star before men ? Emilia flushed and trembled. She lived vividly though her far-projected sensations, until truly pity for Wilfrid was active in her bosom, she feeling how he would yearn for her. The vengeance seemed to her so keen that pity could not fail to come. Thus, to her contemplation, their positions became reversed : it was Wilfrid now who stood in the darkness, unselected. Her fiery fancy, unchained from the despotic heart, illumined her under the golden future.

'Come to us this evening, I will sing to you,' she said, and the 'Englishman under a rope' bowed assentingly.

'Sad songs, if you like,' she added.

'I have always thought sadness more musical than mirth,' said he. 'Surely there is more grace in sadness !'

Poetry, sculpture, and songs, and all the Arts, were brought forward in mournful array to demonstrate the truth of his theory.

When Emilia understood him, she cited dogs and cats, and birds, and all things of nature that rejoiced and revelled, in support of the opposite view.

'Nay, if animals are to be your illustration !' he protested. He had been perhaps half under the delusion that he spoke with Cornelia, and with a sense of infinite misery, he compressed the apt distinction that he had in his mind, which was to show where humanity and simple nature drew a line, and wherein humanity claimed the loftier seat.

'But such talk must be uttered to a *soul*,' he phrased internally, and Emilia was denied what belonged to Cornelia.

Hitherto Emilia had refused to sing, and Madame Marini, faithful to her instructions, had never allowed

her to be pressed to sing. Emilia would brood over notes, thinking : ' I can take that ; and that ; and dwell on such and such a note for any length of time ' ; but she would not call up her voice ; she would not look at her treasure. It seemed more to her, untouched ; and went on doubling its worth, until doubtless her idea of capacity greatly relieved her of the burden on her breast, and the reflection that she held a charm for all, and held it *from* all, flattered one who had been cruelly robbed.

On their way homeward, among the chrysanthemums in the long garden-walk, they met Tracy Runningbrook, between whose shouts of delight and Emilia's reserve there was so marked a contrast that one would have deemed Tracy an offender in her sight. She had said to him entreatingly, ' Do not come,' when he volunteered to call on the Marinis in the evening ; and she got away from him as quickly as she could, promising to be pleased if he called the day following. Tracy flew leaping to one of the great houses where he was tame cat. When Sir Purcell as they passed on spoke a contemptuous word of his soft habits and idleness, Emilia said : ' He is one of my true friends.'

' And why is he interdicted the visit this evening ? '

' Because,' she answered, and grew pale, ' he—he does not care for music. I wish I had not met him.'

She recollected how Tracy's flaming head had sprung up before her—he who had always prophesied that she would be famous for arts unknown to her, and not for song—just when she was having a vision of triumph and caressing the idea of her imprisoned voice bursting its captivity, and soaring into its old heavens.

' He does not care for music ! ' interjected Sir Purcell, with something like a frown. ' I have nothing in common with him. But that I might have known. I can have

nothing in common with a man who is not to be impressed by music.'

'I love him quite as well,' said Emilia. 'He is a quick friend. I am always certain of him.'

'And I imagine also that you are quits with your "quick friend,"' added Sir Purcell. 'You do not care for verse, or he for voices!'

'Poetry?' said Emilia; 'no, not much. It seems like talking on tiptoe; like animals in cages, always going to one end and back again . . .'

'And making the same noise when they get at the end—like the bears!' Sir Purcell slightly laughed. 'You don't approve of the rhymes.'

'Yes, I like the rhymes; but when you use words—I mean, if you are in earnest—how can you count and have stops, and—no, I do not care anything for poetry.'

Sir Purcell's opinion of Emilia, though he liked her, was, that if a genius, she was an incomplete one; and his positive judgement (which I set down in phrase that would have startled him) ranked both her and Tracy as a pair of partial humbugs, entertaining enough. They were both too real for him.

Haply at that moment the girl was intensely susceptible, for she chilled by his side; and when he left her she begged Madame to walk fast. 'I wonder whether I have a cold!' she said.

Madame explained all the signs of it with tragic minuteness, deciding that Emilia was free at present, and by miracle, from this English scourge; but Emilia kept her hands at her mouth. Over the hornbeam hedge of the lane that ran through the market-gardens, she could see a murky sunset spreading its deep-coloured lines, that seemed to her really like a great sorrowing over earth. It had never seemed so till now; and, entering the house, the roar of vehicles in a neighbouring road

sounded like something implacable in the order of things among us, and clung about her ears pitilessly. Running up-stairs, she tried a scale of notes that broke on a cough. 'Did I cough purposely?' she asked herself; but she had not the courage to try the notes again. While dressing she hummed a passage, and sought stealthily to pass the barrier of her own watchfulness by dwelling on a deep note, from which she was to rise bursting with full bravura energy, and so forth on a tide of song. But her breath failed. She stared into the glass and forced the note. A panic caught at her heart when she heard the sound that issued. 'Am I ill? I must be hungry!' she exclaimed. 'It *is* a cough! But I don't cough! What is the matter with me?'

Under these auspices she forced her voice again, and subsequently loosened her dress, complaining of the dressmaker's affection for tightness. 'Now,' she said, having fallen upon an attempt at simple 'do, re, me, fa,' and laughed at herself. Was it the laugh, that stopping her at 'si,' made that 'si' so husky, asthmatic, like the wheezing of a crooked old witch? 'I am unlucky, to-night,' said Emilia. Or, rather, so said her surface-self. The submerged self—self in the depths—rarely speaks to the occasions, but lies under calamity quietly apprehending all; willing that the talker overhead should deceive others, and herself likewise, if possible. Emilia found her hands acting daintily and critically in the attirement of her person; and then surprised herself murmuring: 'I forgot that Tracy won't be here to-night.' By which she betrayed that she had divined those arts she was to shine in, according to Tracy; and betrayed that she had a terrible fear of a loss of all else. It pained her now that Tracy should not be coming. 'Can I send for him?' she thought, as she looked winningly into the glass, trying to feel what sort of a feeling it was to be

in love with a face like that one fronting her, so familiar in its aspects, so strange when scrutinized studiously! She drew a chair, and laying her elbow on the toilet-table, gazed hard, until the thought: 'What face did Wilfrid see last?' (meaning, 'when he saw me last') drove her away.

Not only did she know herself now a face of many faces; but the life within her likewise as a soul of many souls. The one Emilia, so unquestioning, so sure, lay dead; and a dozen new spirits, with but a dim likeness to her, were fighting for possession of her frame, now occupying it alone, now in couples; and each casting grim reflections on the other. Which is only a way of telling you that the great result of mortal suffering—consciousness—had fully set in; to ripen; perhaps to debase; at any rate, to prove her.

To be of worth was still her fixed idea—all that was clear in the thickening mist. 'I cannot be ugly,' she said, and reproved herself for simulating a childish tone. 'Why do I talk in that way? I *know* I am not ugly. But if a fire scorched my face? There is nothing that seems safe!' The love of friends was suggested to her as something to rely on; and the loving them. 'But if I have nothing to give!' said Emilia, and opened both her empty hands. She had diverted her mind from the pressure upon it, by this colloquy with a looking-glass, and gave herself a great rapture by running up notes to this theme:—

'No, no, no, no, no!—nothing! nothing!'

Clear, full, sonant notes; the notes of her true voice. She did not attempt them a second time; nor, when Sir Purcell requested her to sing in the course of the evening, did she comply. 'The Signora thinks I have a cold,' she said. Madame Marini protested that she hoped not, she even thought not, though none could

avoid it at this season in this climate, and she turned to Sir Purcell to petition for any receipts he might have in his possession, specifics for warding off the frightful affliction of households in England.

'I have now twenty,' said Madame, and throwing up her eyes; 'I have tried all! oh! so many lozenge!'

Marini and Emilia laughed. While Sir Purcell was maintaining the fact of his total ignorance of the subject against Madame's incredulity, Emilia left the room. When she came back Madame was pressing her visitor to be explicit with regard to a certain process of cure conducted by an application of cold water. The Neapolitan gave several shudders as she marked him attentively. 'Water cold!' she murmured with the deepest pathos, and dropped her face in her hands with narrowed shoulders. Emilia held a letter over to Sir Purcell. He took it, first assuring himself that Marini was in complicity with them. To Marini Emilia addressed a Momus forefinger, and Marini shrugged, smiling. 'Water cold!' ejaculated Madame, showing her countenance again. 'In winter! Luigi, they *are* mad!' Marini poked the fire briskly, for his sensations entirely sided with his wife.

The letter Sir Purcell held contained these words:

'Be kind, and meet me to-morrow at ten in the morning, at that place where you first saw me sitting. I want you to take me to one who will help me. I cannot lose time any more. I must work. I have been dead for I cannot say how long. I know you will come.

'I am, for ever,

'Your thankful friend,

'EMILIA.'

CHAPTER XXXIX

HER VOICE FAILS

The pride of punctuality brought Sir Purcell to that appointed seat in the gardens about a minute in advance of Emilia. She came hurrying up to him with three fingers over her lips. The morning was cold; frost edged the flat brown chestnut and beech leaves lying about on rimy grass; so at first he made no remark on her evident unwillingness to open her mouth, but a feverish look of her eyes touched him with some kindly alarm for her.

'You should not have come out, if you think you are in any danger,' he said.

'Not if we walk fast,' she replied, in a visibly controlled excitement. 'It will be over in an hour. This way.'

She led the marvelling gentleman toward the row, and across it under the big black elms, begging him to walk faster. To accommodate her, he suggested, that if they had any distance to go, they might ride, and after a short calculating hesitation, she consented, letting him know that she would tell him on what expedition she was bound whilst they were riding. The accompaniment of the wheels, however, necessitated a higher pitch of her voice, which apparently caused her to suffer from a contraction of the throat, for she remained silent, with a discouraged aspect, her full brown eyes showing as in a sombre meditation beneath the thick brows. The direction had been given to the City. On they went with the torrent, and were presently engulfed in fog. The roar grew muffled, phantoms poured along the pave-

ment, yellow beamless lights were in the shop-windows, all the vehicles went at a slow march.

'It looks as if Business were attending its own obsequies,' said Sir Purcell, whose spirits were enlivened by an atmosphere that confirmed his impression of things.

Emilia cried twice : 'Oh ! what cruel weather ! ' Her eyelids blinked, either with anger or in misery.

They were set down a little beyond the Bank, and when they turned from the cabman, Sir Purcell was warm in his offer of his arm to her, for he had seen her wistfully touching what money she had in her pocket, and approved her natural good breeding in allowing it to pass unmentioned.

'Now,' he said, 'I must know what you want to do.'

'A quiet place ! there is no quiet place in this City,' said Emilia fretfully.

A gentleman passing took off his hat, saying, with City politeness, 'Pardon me : you are close to a quiet place. Through that door, and the hall, you will find a garden, where you will hear London as if it sounded fifty miles off.'

He bowed and retired, and the two (Emilia thankful, Sir Purcell tending to anger), following his indication, soon found themselves in a most perfect retreat, the solitude of which they had the misfortune, however, of destroying for another, and a scared, couple

Here Emilia said : 'I have determined to go to Italy at once. Mr. Pericles has offered to pay for me. It 's my father's wish. And—and I cannot wait and feel like a beggar. I must go. I shall always love England —don't fear that ! '

Sir Purcell smiled at the simplicity of her pleading look.

'Now, I want to know where to find Mr. Pericles,' she pursued. 'And if you will come to him with me ! He

is sure to be very angry—I thought you might protect me from that. But when he hears that I am really going at last—at once!—he can laugh sometimes! you will see him rub his hands.'

'I must inquire where his chambers are to be found,' said Sir Purcell.

'Oh! anybody in the City must know him, because he is so rich.' Emilia coughed. 'This fog kills me. Pray make haste. Dear friend, I trouble you very much, but I want to get away from this. I can hardly breathe. I shall have no heart for my task, if I don't see him soon.'

'Wait for me, then,' said Sir Purcell; 'you cannot wait in a better place. And I must entreat you to be careful.' He half alluded to the adjustment of her shawl, and to anything else, as far as she might choose to apprehend him. Her dexterity in tossing him the letter, unseen by Madame Marini, might have frightened him and given him a dread, that albeit woman, there was germ of wickedness in her. This pained him acutely, for he never forgot that she had been the means of his introduction to Cornelia, from whom he could not wholly dissociate her: and the idea that any prospective shred of impurity hung about one who had even looked on his beloved, was utter anguish to the keen sentimentalist. 'Be very careful,' he would have repeated, but that he had a warning sense of the ludicrous, and Emilia's large eyes when they fixed calmly on a face were not of a flighty cast. She stood, too, with the 'dignity of sadness,' as he was pleased to phrase it.

'She must be safe here,' he said to himself. And yet, upon reflection, he decided not to leave her, peremptorily informing her to that effect. Emilia took his arm, and as they were passing through the hall of entrance they met the same gentleman who had directed them to the

spot of quiet. Both she and Sir Purcell heard him say to a companion : 'There she is.' A deep glow covered Emilia's face. 'Do they know you ?' asked Sir Purcell. 'No,' she said : and then he turned, but the couple had gone on.

'That deserves chastisement,' he muttered. Briefly telling her to wait, he pursued them. Emilia was standing in the gateway, not at all comprehending why she was alone. 'Sandra Belloni !' struck her ear. Looking forward she perceived a hand and a head gesticulating from a cab-window. She sprang out into the street, and instantly the hand clenched and the head glared savagely. It was Mr. Pericles himself, in travelling costume.

'I am your fool ?' he began, overbearing Emilia's most irritating 'How are you ?' and 'Are you quite well ?'

'I am your fool ? hein ? You send me to Paris ! to Genève ! I go over Lago Maggiore, and aha ! it is your joke, Meess ! I juste return. Oh capital ! At Milano I wait—I inquire—till a letter from old Belloni, and I learn I am your fool—of you all ! Jomp in.'

'A gentleman is coming,' said Emilia, by no means intimidated, though the forehead of Mr. Pericles looked portentous. 'He was bringing me to you.'

'Zen, jomp in !' cried Mr. Pericles.

Here Sir Purcell came up.

Emilia said softly : 'Mr. Pericles.'

There was the form of a bow of moderate recognition between them, but other hats were off to Emilia. The two gentlemen who had offended Sir Purcell had insisted, on learning the nature of their offence, that they had a right to present their regrets to the lady in person, and beg an excuse from her lips. Sir Purcell stood white with a futile effort at self-control, as one of them,

preluding 'Pardon me,' said: 'I had the misfortune to remark to my friend, as I passed you, "There she is." May I, indeed, ask your pardon? My friend is an artist. I met him after I had first seen you. He, at least, does not think foolish my recommendation to him that he should look on you at all hazards. Let me petition you to overlook the impertinence.'

'I think, gentlemen, you have now made the most of the advantage my folly, in supposing you would regret or apologize fittingly for an impropriety, has given you,' interposed Sir Purcell.

His new and superior tone (for he had previously lost his temper and spoken with a silly vehemence) caused them to hesitate. One begged the word of pardon from Emilia to cover his retreat. She gave it with an air of thorough-bred repose, saying, 'I willingly pardon you,' and looking at them no more, whereupon they vanished. Ten minutes later, Emilia and Sir Purcell were in the chambers of Mr. Pericles.

The Greek had done nothing but grin obnoxiously to every word spoken on the way, drawing his hand down across his jaw, to efface the hard pale wrinkles, and eyeing Emilia's cavalier with his shrewdest suspicious look.

'You will excuse,'—he pointed to the confusion of the room they were in, and the heap of unopened letters,—'I am from ze Continent; I do not expect ze pleasure. A seat?'

Mr. Pericles handed chairs to his visitors.

'It is a climate, is it not?' he resumed.

Emilia said a word, and he snapped at her, immediately adding, 'Hein? Ah! so!' with a charming urbanity.

'How lucky that we should meet you,' exclaimed Emilia. 'We were just coming to you—to find out, I mean, where you were, and call on you.'

'Ongh! do not tell me lies,' said Mr. Pericles, clasping the hollow of his cheeks between thumb and forefinger.

'Allow me to assure you that what Miss Belloni has said is perfectly correct,' Sir Purcell remarked.

Mr. Pericles gave a short bow. 'It is ze same; I am much obliged.'

'And you have just come from Italy?' said Emilia.

'Where you did me ze favour to send me, it is true. Sanks!'

'Oh, what a difference between Italy and this!' Emilia turned her face to the mottled yellow windows.

'Many sanks,' repeated Mr. Pericles, after which the three continued silent for a time.

At last Emilia said, bluntly, 'I have come to ask you to take me to Italy.'

Mr. Pericles made no sign, but Sir Purcell leaned forward to her with a gaze of astonishment, almost of horror.

'Will you take me?' persisted Emilia.

Still the sullen Greek refused either to look at her or to answer.

'Because I am ready to go,' she went on. 'I want to go at once; to-day, if you like. I am getting too old to waste an hour.'

Mr. Pericles uncrossed his legs, ejaculating, 'What a fog! Ah!' and that was all. He rose, and went to a cupboard.

Sir Purcell murmured hurriedly in Emilia's ear, 'Have you considered what you 've been saying?'

'Yes, yes. It is only a journey,' Emilia replied, in a like tone.

'A journey!'

'My father wishes it.'

'Your mother?'

'Hush! I intend to make him take the Madre with me.'

She designated Mr. Pericles, who had poured into a small liqueur glass some green Chartreuse, smelling strong of pines. His visitors declined to eject the London fog by this aid of the mountain monks, and Mr. Pericles warmed himself alone.

'You are wiz old Belloni,' he called out.

'I am not staying with my father,' said Emilia.

'Where?' Mr. Pericles shed a baleful glance on Sir Purcell.

'I am staying with Signor Marini.'

'Servente!' Mr. Pericles ducked his head quite low, while his hand swept the floor with an imaginary cap. Malice had lighted up his features, and finding, after the first burst of sarcasm, that it was vain to indulge it toward an absent person, he altered his style. 'Look,' he cried to Emilia, 'it is Marini stops you and old Belloni—a conspirator, aha! Is it for an artist to conspire, and be carbonaro, and kiss books, and, Mon Dieu! bon! it is Marini plays me zis trick. I mark him. I mark him, I say! He is paid by young Pole. I hold zat family in my hand, I say! So I go to be met by you, and on I go to Italy. I get a letter at Milano,—"Marini stop me at Dover," signed "Giuseppe Belloni." Ze letter have been spied into by ze Austrians. I am watched—I am dogged—I am imprisoned—I am examined. "You know zis Giuseppe Belloni?" "Meine Herrn! he was to come. I leave word at Paris for him, at Genève, at Stresa, to bring his daughter to ze Conservatoire, for which I pay. She has a voice—or she had."'

'Has!' exclaimed Emilia.

'Had!' Mr. Pericles repeated.

'She has!'

'Zen sing!' with which thunder of command, Mr.

Pericles gave up his vindictive narration of the points of his injuries sustained, and, pitching into a chair, pressed his fingers to his temples, frowning attention. His eyes were on the floor. Presently he glanced up, and saw Emilia's chest rising quickly. No voice issued.

'It is to commence,' cried Mr. Pericles. 'Hein! now sing.'

Emilia laid her hand under her throat. 'Not now! Oh, not now! When you have told me what those Austrians did to you. I want to hear; I am very anxious to hear. And what they said of my father. How could he have come to Milan without a passport? He had only a passport to Paris.'

'And at Paris I leave instructions for ze procuration of a passport over Lombardy. Am I not Antonio Pericles Agriolopoulos? Sing, I say!'

'Ah! but what voices you must have heard in Italy,' said Emilia softly. 'I am afraid to sing after them. Sì: I dare not.'

She panted, little in keeping with the cajolery of her tones, but she had got Mr. Pericles upon a theme serious to his mind.

'Not a voice! not one!' he cried, stamping his foot. 'All is French. I go twice wizin six monz, and if I go to a goose-yard I hear better. Oh, yes! it is tune—"ta-ta-ta—ti-ti-ti—to!" and of ze heart—where is zat? Mon Dieu! I despair. I see music go dead. Let me hear you, Sandra.'

His enthusiasm had always affected Emilia, and painfully since her love had given her a consciousness of infidelity to her Art, but now the pathetic appeal to her took away her strength, and tears rose in her eyes at the thought of his faith in her. His repetition of her name—the 'Sandra' being uttered with unwonted softness—plunged her into a fit of weeping.

'Ah!' Mr. Pericles shouted. 'See what she has come to!' and he walked two or three paces off to turn upon her spitefully. 'She will be vapeurs, nerfs, I know not! when it wants a physique of a saint! Sandra Belloni,' he added, gravely, 'lift up ze head! Sing, "*Sempre al tuo santo nome.*"'

Emilia checked her tears. His hand being raised to beat time, she could not withstand the signal. 'Sempre'; —there came two struggling notes, to which another clung, shuddering like two creatures on the deeps.

She stopped; herself oddly calling out 'Stop.'

'Stop who, *donc*?' Mr. Pericles postured an indignant interrogation.

'I mean, I must stop,' Emilia faltered. 'It 's the fog. I cannot sing in this fog. It chokes me.'

Apparently Mr. Pericles was about to say something frightfully savage, which was restrained by the presence of Sir Purcell. He went to the door in answer to a knock, while Emilia drew breath as calmly as she might; her head moving a little backward with her breathing, in a sad mechanical way painful to witness. Sir Purcell stretched his hand out to her, but she did not take it. She was listening to voices at the door. Was it really Mr. Pole who was there? Quite unaware of the effect the sight of her would produce on him, Emilia rose and walked to the doorway. She heard Mr. Pole abusing Mr. Pericles half banteringly for his absence while business was urgent, saying that they must lay their heads together and consult, otherwise—a significant indication appeared to close the sentence.

'But if you 've just come off your journey, and have got a lady in there, we must postpone, I suppose. Say, this afternoon. I 'll keep up to the mark, if nothing happens. . . .'

Emilia pushed the door from the hand of Mr. Pericles,

and was advancing toward the old man on the landing; but no sooner did the latter verify to his startled understanding that he had seen her, than with an exclamation of 'All right! good-bye!' he began a rapid descent of the stairs. A distance below, he bade Mr. Pericles take care of her, and as an excuse for his abrupt retreat, the word 'busy' sounded up.

'Does my face frighten him?' Emilia thought. It made her look on herself with a foreign eye. This is a dreadful but instructive piece of contemplation; acting as if the rich warm blood of self should have ceased to hug about us, and we stand forth to be dissected unresistingly. All Emilia's vital strength now seemed to vanish. At the renewal of Mr. Pericles' peremptory mandate for her to sing, she could neither appeal to him, nor resist; but, raising her chest, she made her best effort, and then covered her face. This was done less for concealment of her shame-stricken features than to avoid sight of the stupefaction imprinted upon Mr. Pericles.

'Again, zat A flat!' he called sternly.

She tried it.

'Again!'

Again she did her utmost to accomplish the task. If you have seen a girl in a fit of sobs elevate her head, with hard-shut eyelids, while her nostrils convulsively take in a long breath, as if for speech, but it is expended in one quick vacant sigh, you know how Emilia looked. And it requires a humane nature to pardon such an aspect in a person from whom we have expected triumphing glances and strong thrilling tones.

'What is zis?' Mr. Pericles came nearer to her.

He would listen to no charges against the atmosphere. Commanding her to give one simple run of notes, a contr'alto octave, he stood over her with keenly watchful eyes. Sir Purcell bade him observe her distress.

'I am much obliged,' Mr. Pericles bowed. 'She is ruined. I have suspected. Ha! But I ask for a note! One!'

This imperious signal drew her to another attempt. The deplorable sound that came sent Emilia sinking down with a groan.

'Basta, basta! So, it is zis tale,' said Mr. Pericles, after an observation of her huddled shape. 'Did I not say——'

His voice was so menacingly loud and harsh that Sir Purcell remarked: 'This is not the time to repeat it—pardon me—whatever you said.'

'Ze fool—she play ze fool! Sir, I forget ze Christian—ah! Purcèll!—I say she play ze fool, and look at her! Why is it she comes to me now? A dozen times I warn her. To Italy! to Italy! all is ready: you will have a place at ze Conservatorio. No: she refuse. I say—"Go, and you are a queen. You are a Prima at twenty, and Europe is beneas you." No: she refuse, and she is ruined. "What," I say, "what zat dam silly smile mean?" "Oh, no! I am not lazy!" "But you are a fool!" "Oh, no!" "And what are you, zen? And what shall you do?" Nussing! nussing! nussing! And, dam! zere is an end.'

Emilia had caught blindly at Sir Purcell's hand, by which she raised herself, and then uncovering her face, looked furtively at the malign furnace-white face of Mr. Pericles.

'It cannot have gone,'—she spoke, as if mentally balancing the possibility.

'It has gone, I say; and you know why, Mademoiselle ze Fool!' Mr. Pericles retorted.

'No, no; it can't be gone. Gone? voices never go!'

The reiteration of the 'You know why,' from Mr. Pericles, and all the wretchedness of loss it suggested,

robbed her of the little spark of nervous fire by which she felt half-reviving in courage and confidence.

'Let me try once more,' she appealed to him, in a frenzy.

Mr. Pericles, though fully believing in his heart that it might only be a temporary deprivation of voice, affected to scout the notion of another trial, but finally extended his forefinger: 'Well, now; start! "*Sempre al tuo santo!*" Commence: *Sem*—' and Mr. Pericles hummed the opening bar, not as an unhopeful man would do. The next moment he was laughing horribly. Emilia, to make sure of the thing she dreaded, forced the note, and would not be denied. What voice there was in her came to the summons. It issued, if I may so express it, ragged, as if it had torn through a briar-hedge: then there was a whimper of tones, and the effect was like the lamentation of a hardly-used urchin, lacking a certain music that there is in his undoubted heartfelt earnestness. No single note poised firmly for the instant, but swayed, trembling on its neighbour to right and to left: when pressed for articulate sound, it went into a ghastly whisper. The laughter of Mr. Pericles was pleasing discord in comparison.

CHAPTER XL

SHE TASTES DESPAIR

Emilia stretched out her hand and said, 'Good-bye.' Seeing that the hardened girl, with her dead eyelids, did not appear to feel herself at his mercy, and also that Sir Purcell's forehead looked threatening, Mr. Pericles stopped his sardonic noise. He went straight to the

door, which he opened with alacrity, and mimicking very wretchedly her words of adieu, stood prepared to bow her out. She astonished him by passing without another word. Before he could point a phrase bitter enough for expression, Sir Purcell had likewise passed, and in going had given him a quietly admonishing look.

'Zose Poles are beggàrs!' Mr. Pericles roared after them over the stairs, and slammed his door for emphasis. Almost immediately there was a knock at it. Mr. Pericles stood bent and cat-like as Sir Purcell reappeared. The latter, avoiding all preliminaries, demanded of the Greek that he should promise not to use the names of his friends publicly in such a manner again.

'I require a promise for the future. An apology will be needless from you.'

'I shall not give it,' said Mr. Pericles, with a sharp lift of his upper lip.

'But you will give me the promise I have returned for.'

In answer Mr. Pericles announced that he had spoken what was simply true: that the prosperity of the Poles was fictitious: that he, or any unfavourable chance, could ruin them: and that their friends might do better to protect their interests than by menacing one who had them in his power.

Sir Purcell merely reiterated his demand for the promise, which was ultimately snarled to him; whereupon he retired, joy on his features. For, Cornelia poor, she might be claimed by him fearlessly: that is to say, without the fear of people whispering that the penniless baronet had sued for gold, and without the fear of her father rejecting his suit. At least he might, with this knowledge that he had gained, appoint to meet her now! All the morning Sir Purcell had been combative, owing to that subordinate or secondary post he occupied in a

situation of some excitement;—which combativeness is one method whereby men thus placed, imagining that they are acting devotedly for their friends, contrive still to assert themselves. He descended to the foot of the stairs, where he had told Emilia to wait for him, full of kind feelings and ready cheerful counsels; as thus: 'Nothing that we possess belongs to us;—All will come round rightly in the end;—Be patient, look about for amusement, and improve your mind.' And more of this copper coinage of wisdom in the way of proverbs. But Emilia was nowhere visible to receive the administration of comfort. Outside the house the fog appeared to have swallowed her. With some chagrin on her behalf (partly a sense of duty unfulfilled) Sir Purcell made his way to the residence of the Marinis, to report of her there, if she should not have arrived. The punishment he inflicted on himself in keeping his hand an hour from that letter to be written to Cornelia, was almost pleasing; and he was rewarded by it, for the projected sentences grew mellow and rich, condensed and throbbed eloquently. What wonder, that with such a mental occupation, he should pass Emilia and not notice her? She let him go.

But when he was out of sight, all seemed gone. The dismally-lighted city wore a look of Judgement terrible to see. Her brain was slave to her senses: she fancied she had dropped into an underground kingdom, among a mysterious people. The anguish through which action had just hurried her, now fell with a conscious weight upon her heart. She stood a moment, seeing her desolation stretch outwardly into endless labyrinths; and then it narrowed and took hold of her as a force within: changeing thus, almost with each breathing of her body.

The fog had thickened. Up and down the groping city went muffled men, few women. Emilia looked for one of her sex who might have a tender face. Desire

to be kissed and loved by a creature strange to her, and to lay her head upon a woman's bosom, moved her to gaze around with a longing once or twice ; but no eyes met hers, and the fancy recurred vividly that she was not in the world she had known. Otherwise, what had robbed her of her voice ? She played with the fancy for comfort, long after any real vitality in it had oozed out. Her having strength to play at fancies showed that a spark of hope was alive. In truth, firm of flesh as she was, to believe that all worth had departed from her was impossible, and when she reposed simply on her sensations, very little trouble beset her : only when she looked abroad did the aspect of numerous indifferent faces, and the harsh flowing of the world its own way, tell her she had lost her power. Could it be lost ? The prospect of her desolation grew so wide to her that she shut her eyes, abandoning herself to feeling ; and this by degrees moved her to turn back and throw herself at the feet of Mr. Pericles. For, if he said, 'Wait, my child, and all will come round well,' she was prepared blindly to think so. The projection of the words in her mind made her ready to weep : but as she neared the house of his office the wish to hear him speak that, became passionate ; she counted all that depended on it, and discovered the size of the fabric she had built on so thin a plank. After a while, her steps were mechanically swift. Before she reached the chambers of Mr. Pericles she had walked, she knew not why, once round the little quiet enclosed city-garden, and a cold memory of those men who had looked at her face gave her some wonder, to be quickly kindled into fuller comprehension.

Beholding Emilia once more, Mr. Pericles enjoyed a revival of his taste for vengeance ; but, unhappily for her, he found it languid, and when he had rubbed his hands, stared, and by sundry sharp utterances brought

her to his feet, his satisfaction was less poignant than he had expected. As a consequence, instead of speaking outrageously, according to his habit, in wrath, he was now frigidly considerate, informing Emilia that it would be good for her if she were dead, seeing that she was of no use whatever; but, as she was alive, she had better go to her father and mother, and learn knitting, or some such industrial employment. 'Unless zat man for whom you play fool!——' Mr. Pericles shrugged the rest of his meaning.

'But my voice may not be gone,' urged Emilia. 'I may sing to you to-morrow—this evening. It must be the fog. Why do you think it lost? It can't be——'

'Cracked!' cried Mr. Pericles.

'It is not! No; do not think it. I may stay here. Don't tell me to go yet. The streets make me wish to die. And I feel I may, perhaps, sing presently. Wait. Will you wait?'

A hideous imitation of her lamentable tones burst from Mr. Pericles. 'Cracked!' he cried again.

Emilia lifted her eyes, and looked at him steadily. She saw the idea grow in the eyes fronting her that she had a pleasant face, and she at once staked this little bit of newly-conceived worth on an immediate chance. Remember, that she was as near despair as a creature constituted so healthily could go. Speaking no longer in a girlish style, but with the grave pleading manner of a woman, she begged Mr. Pericles to take her to Italy, and have faith in the recovery of her voice. He, however, far from being softened, as he grew aware of her sweetness of feature, waxed violent and insulting.

'Take me,' she said. 'My voice will reward you. I feel that you can cure it.'

'For zat man! to go to him again!' Mr. Pericles sneered.

'I never shall do that.' There sprang a glitter as of steel in Emilia's eyes. 'I will make myself yours for life, if you like. Take my hand, and let me swear. I do not break my word. I will swear, that if I recover my voice to become what you expected,—I will marry you whenever you ask me, and then——'

More she was saying, but Mr. Pericles, sputtering a laugh of 'Sanks!' presented a postured supplication for silence.

'I am not a man who marries.'

He plainly stated the relations that the woman whom he had distinguished by the honours of selection must hold toward him.

Emilia's cheeks did not redden; but, without any notion of shame at the words she listened to, she felt herself falling lower and lower the more her spirit clung to Mr. Pericles: yet he alone was her visible personification of hope, and she could not turn from him. If he cast her off, it seemed to her that her voice was condemned. She stood there still, and the cold-eyed Greek formed his opinion.

He was evidently undecided as regards his own course of proceeding, for his chin was pressed by thumb and forefinger hard into his throat, while his eyebrows were wrinkled up to their highest elevation. From this attitude, expressive of the accurate balancing of the claims of an internal debate, he emerged into the posture of a cock crowing, and Emilia heard again his bitter mimicry of her miserable broken tones, followed by 'Ha! dam! Basta! basta!'

'Sit here,' cried Mr. Pericles. He had thrown himself into a chair, and pointed to his knee.

Emilia remained where she was standing.

He caught at her hand, but she plucked that from him. Mr. Pericles rose, sounding a cynical 'Hein!'

'Don't touch me,' said Emilia.

Nothing exasperates certain natures so much as the effort of the visibly weak to intimidate them.

'I shall not touch you?' Mr. Pericles sneered. 'Zen, why are you here?'

'I came to my friend,' was Emilia's reply.

'Your friend! He is not ze friend of a couac-couac. Once, if you please: but now' (Mr. Pericles shrugged), 'now you are like ze rest of women. You are game. Come to me.'

He caught once more at her hand, which she lifted; then at her elbow.

'Will you touch me when I tell you not to?'

There was the soft line of an involuntary frown over her white face, and as he held her arm from the doubled elbow, with her clenched hand aloft, she appeared ready to strike a tragic blow.

Anger and every other sentiment vanished from Mr. Pericles in the rapturous contemplation of her admirable artistic pose.

'Mon Dieu! and wiz a voice!' he exclaimed, dashing his fist in a delirium of forgetfulness against the one plastered lock of hair on his shining head. 'Little fool! little dam fool!—zat might have been'—(Mr. Pericles figured in air with his fingers to signify the exaltation she was to have attained)—'Mon Dieu! and look at you! Did I not warn you? non è vero? Did I not say "Ruin, ruin, if you go so? For a man!—a voice!" You will not come to me? Zen, hear! you shall go to old Belloni. I do not want you, my pretty dear. Woman is a trouble, a drug. You shall go to old Belloni; and, crack! if ze voice will come back to a whip,—bravo, old Belloni!'

Mr. Pericles turned to reach down his hat from a peg. At the same instant Emilia quitted the room.

Dusk was deepening the yellow atmosphere, and the crowd was now steadily flowing in one direction. The bereaved creature went with the stream, glad to be surrounded and unseen, till it struck her, at last, that she was moving homeward. She stopped with a pang of grief, turned, and met all those people to whom the fireside was a beacon. For some time she bore against the pressure, but her loneliness overwhelmed her. None seemed to go her way. For a refuge, she turned into one of the city side streets, where she was quite alone. Unhappily, the street was of no length, and she soon came to the end of it. There was the choice of retracing her steps, or entering a strange street; and while she hesitated a troop of sheep went by, that made a piteous noise. She followed them, thinking curiously of the something broken that appeared to be in their throats. By-and-by, the thought flashed in her that they were going to be slaughtered. She held her step, looking at them, but without any tender movement of the heart. They came to a butcher's yard, and went in.

When she had passed along a certain distance, a shiver seized her, and her instinct pushed her toward the lighted shops, where there were pictures. In one she saw the portrait of that Queen of Song whom she had heard at Besworth. Two young men, glancing as they walked by arm in arm, pronounced the name of the great enchantress, and hummed one of her triumphant airs. The features expressed health, humour, power, every fine animal faculty. Genius was on the forehead and the plastic mouth; the forehead being well projected, fair, and very shapely, showing clear balance, as well as capacity to grasp flame, and fling it. The line reaching to a dimple from the upper lip was saved from scornfulness by the lovely gleam, half-challenging, half-consoling, regal, roguish—what you would—that

sat between her dark eyelashes, like white sunlight on the fringed smooth roll of water by a weir. Such a dimple, and such a gleam of eyes, would have been keys to the face of a weakling, and it was the more fascinating from the disregard of any minor charm notable upon this grand visage, which could not suffer a betrayal. You saw, and there was no effort to conceal, that the spirit animating it was intensely human; but it was human of the highest chords of humanity, indifferent to finesse and despising subtleties; gifted to speak, to inspire, and to command all great emotions. In fact, it was the masque of a dramatic artist in repose. Tempered by beauty, the robust frame showed that she possessed a royal nature, and could, as a foremost qualification for Art, feel harmoniously. She might have many of the littlenesses of which women are accused; for Art she promised unspotted excellence; and, adorable as she was by attraction of her sex, she was artist over all.

Emilia found herself on one of the bridges, thinking of this aspect. Beneath her was the stealing river, with its red intervals, and the fog had got a wider circle. She could not disengage that face from her mind. It seemed to say to her, boldly, 'I live because success is mine'; and to hint, as with a paler voice, 'Death the fruit of failure.' Could she, Emilia, ever be looked on again by her friends? The dread of it gave her shudders. Then, death was certainly easy! But death took no form in her imagination, as it does to one seeking it. She desired to forget and to hide her intolerable losses; to have the impostor she felt herself to be buried. As she walked along she held out her hands, murmuring, 'Helpless! useless!' It came upon her as a surprise that one like herself should be allowed to live. 'I don't want to,' she said; and the next moment, 'I wonder

what a drowned woman is like ? ' She hurried back to the streets and the shops. The shops failed now to give her distraction, for a stiff and dripping image floated across all the windows, and she was glad to see the shutters being closed ; though, when the streets were dark, some friendliness seemed to have gone. When the streets were quite dark, save for the row of lamps, she walked fast, fearing she knew not what.

A little Italian boy sat doubled over his organ on a doorstep, while a yet smaller girl at his elbow plied him with questions in English. Emilia stopped before them, and the girl complained to her that the perverse little foreigner would not answer. Two or three words in his native tongue soon brought his face to view. Emilia sat down between them, and listened to the prattle of two languages. The girl said that she never had supper, which was also the case with the boy ; so Emilia felt for her purse, and sent the girl with sixpence in search of a shop that sold cakes. The girl came back with her apron full. As they were all about to eat, a policeman commanded them to quit the spot, informing them that he knew both them and their dodges. Emilia stood up, and was taking her little people away, when the policeman, having suddenly changed his accurate opinion of her, said, ' You 're giving 'em some supper, miss ? Oh, they must sit down to their suppers, you know ! ' and walked away, not to be a witness of this infraction of the law. So, they sat down and ate, and the boy and girl tried to say intelligible things to one another, and laughed. Emilia could not help joining in their laughter. The girl was very anxious to know whether the boy was ever beaten, and hearing that he was, she appeared better satisfied, remarking that she was also, but curious still as to the different forms of chastisement they received. This being partially explained, she

wished to know whether he would be beaten that night, Emilia interpreting. A grin, and a rapid whistle and 'cluck,' significant of the application of whips, told the state of his expectations; at which the girl clapped her hands, adding, lamentably, 'So shall I, 'cause I am always.' Emilia gathered them under each shoulder, when, to her delight and half perplexity, they closed their eyes, leaning against her.

The policeman passed, and for an hour endured this spectacle. At last he felt compelled to explain to Emilia what were the sentiments of gentlefolks with regard to their doorsteps, apart from the law of the matter. He put it to her human nature whether she would like *her* doorsteps to be blocked, so that no one could enter, and any one emerging stood a chance of being precipitated, nose foremost, upon the pavement. Then, again, as gentlefolks had good experience of, the young ones in London were twice as cunning as the old. Emilia pleaded for her sleeping pair, that they might not be disturbed. Her voice gave the keeper of the peace notions of her being one of the eccentric young ladies who are occasionally 'missing,' and have advertizing friends. He uttered a stern ahem! preliminary to assent; but the noise wakened the children, who stared, and readily obeyed his gesture, which said, 'Be off!' while his words were those of remonstrance. Emilia accompanied them a little way. Both promised eagerly that they would be at the same place the night following and departed—the boy with laughing nods and waving of hands, which the girl imitated. Emilia's feeling of security went with them. She at once feigned a destination in the distance, and set forward to reach it, but the continued exposure of this delusion made it difficult to renew. She fell to counting the hours that were to elapse before she would meet those children, saying to

herself, that whatever she did she must keep her engagement to be at the appointed steps. This restriction set her darkly fancying that she wished for her end.

Remembering those men who had looked at her admiringly, 'Am I worth looking at?' she said; and it gave her some pleasure to think that she had it still in her power to destroy a thing of value. She was savagely ashamed of going to death empty-handed. By-and-by, great fatigue stiffened her limbs, and she sat down from pure want of rest. The luxury of rest and soothing languor kept hard thoughts away. She felt as if floating, for a space. The fear of the streets left her. But when necessity for rest had gone, she clung to the luxury still, and sitting bent forward, with her hands about her knees, she began to brood over tumbled images of a wrong done to her. She had two distinct visions of herself, constantly alternating and acting like the temptation of two devils. One represented her despicable in feature, and bade her die; the other showed a fair face, feeling which to be her own, Emilia had fits of intolerable rage. This vision prevailed; and this wicked side of her humanity saved her. Active despair is a passion that must be superseded by a passion. Passive despair comes later; it has nothing to do with mental action, and is mainly a corruption or degradation of our blood. The rage in Emilia was blind at first, but it rose like a hawk, and singled its enemy. She fixed her mind to conceive the foolishness of putting out a face that her rival might envy, and of destroying anything that had value. The flattery of beauty came on her like a warm garment. When she opened her eyes, seeing what she was and where, she almost smiled at the silly picture that had given her comfort. Those men had looked on her admiringly, it was true, but would Wilfrid have ceased

to love her if she had been beautiful ? An extraordinary intuition of Wilfrid's sentiment tormented her now. She saw herself in the light that he would have seen her by, till she stood with the sensations of an exposed criminal in the dark length of the street, and hurried down it, back, as well as she could find her way, to the friendly policeman.

Her question on reaching him, 'Are you married ?' was prodigiously astonishing, and he administered the rebuff of an affirmative with severity. 'Then,' said Emilia, 'when you go home, let me go with you to your wife. Perhaps she will consent to take care of me for this night.' The policeman coughed mildly and replied, 'It 's plain you know nothing of women—begging your pardon, miss,—for I can see you 're a lady.' Emilia repeated her petition, and the policeman explained the nature of women. Not to be baffled, Emilia said, 'I think your wife must be a good woman.' Hereat the policeman laughed, affirming 'that the best of them knew what bad suspicions was.' Ultimately, he consented to take her to his wife, when he was relieved, after the term of so many minutes. Emilia stood at a distance, speculating on the possible choice he would make of a tune to accompany his monotonous walk to and fro, and on the certainty of his wearing any tune to nothing.

She was in a bed, sleeping heavily, a little before dawn.

The day that followed was her day of misery. The blow that had stunned her had become as a loud intrusive pulse in her head. By this new daylight she fathomed the depth, and reckoned the value, of her loss. And her senses had no pleasure in the light, though there was sunshine. The woman who was her hostess was kind, but full of her first surprise at the strange visit, and too openly ready for any information the young lady might

be willing to give with regard to her condition, prospects, and wishes. Emilia gave none. She took the woman's hand, asking permission to remain under her protection. The woman by-and-by named a sum of money as a sum for weekly payment, and Emilia transferred all to her that she had. The policeman and his wife thought her, though reasonable, a trifle insane. She sat at a window for hours watching a 'last man' of the fly species walking up and plunging down a pane of glass. On this transparent solitary field for the most objectless enterprise ever undertaken, he buzzed angrily at times, as if he had another meaning in him, which was being wilfully misinterpreted. Then he mounted again at his leisure, to pitch backward as before. Emilia found herself thinking with great seriousness that it was not wonderful for boys to be always teasing and killing flies, whose thin necks and bobbing heads themselves suggested the idea of decapitation. She said to her hostess: 'I don't like flies. They seem never to sing but when they are bothered.' The woman replied: 'Ah, indeed?' very smoothly, and thought: 'If you was to bust out now, which of us two would be strongest?' Emilia grew distantly aware that the policeman and his wife talked of her and watched her with combined observation.

When it was night she went to keep her appointment. The girl was there, but the boy came late. He said he had earned only a few pence that day, and would be beaten. He spoke in a whimpering tone which caused the girl to desire a translation of his words. Emilia told her how things were with him, and the girl expressed a wish that she had an organ, as in that case she would be sure to earn more than sixpence a day; such being the amount that procured her nightly a comfortable reception in the arms of her parents. Do you like music?' said Emilia. The girl replied that she liked

organs; but, as if to avoid committing an injustice, cited parrots as foremost in her affections. Holding them both to her breast, Emilia thought that she would rescue them from this beating by giving them the money they had to offer for kindness: but the restlessness of the children suddenly made her a third party to the thought of cakes. She had no money. Her heart bled for the poor little hungry, apprehensive creatures. For a moment she half fancied she had her voice, and looked up at the windows of the pitiless houses with a bold look; but there was a speedy mockery of her thought—'You shall listen: you shall open!' She coughed hoarsely, and then fell into fits of crying. Her friend the policeman came by and took her arm with a force that he meant to be persuasive; so lifting her and handing her some steps beyond the limit of his beat, with stern directions for her to proceed home immediately. She obeyed. Next day she asked her hostess to lend her half-a-crown. The woman snapped shortly in answer: 'No; the less you have the better.' Emilia was obliged to abandon her little people.

She was to this extent the creature of mania: that she could not conceive of a way being open by which she might return to her father and mother, or any of her friends. It was to her not a matter for her will to decide upon, but simply a black door shut that nothing could displace. When the week, for which term of shelter she had paid, was ended, her hostess spoke upon this point, saying, more to convince Emilia of the necessity for seeking her friends than from any unkindness: 'Me and my husband can't go on keepin' you, you know, my dear, however well 's our meaning.' Emilia drew the woman toward her with both her hands, softly shaking her head. She left the house about noon.

It was now her belief that she had probably no more

than another day to live, for she was destitute of money. The thought relieved her from that dreadful fear of the street, and she walked at her own pace, even after dark. The rumble and the rattle of wheels; the cries and grinding noises; the hum of motion and talk; all under the lingering smoky red of a London Winter sunset, were not discord to her animated blood. Her unhunted spirit made a music of them. It was not like the music of other days, nor was the exultation it created at all like happiness: but she at least forgot herself. Voices came in her ear, and hung unheard until long after the speaker had passed. Hunger did not assail her. She was not beset by an animal weakness; and having in her mind no image of death, and with her ties to life cut away;—thus devoid of apprehension or regret, she was what her quick blood made her, for the time. She recognized that, for one near extinction, it was useless to love or to hate: so Wilfrid and Lady Charlotte were spared. Emilia thought of them both with a sort of equanimity; not that any clear thought filled her brain through that delirious night. The intoxicating music raged there at one level depression, never rising any scale, never undulating ever so little, scarcely changeing its barbarous monotony of notes. She had no power over it. Her critical judgement would at another moment have shrieked at it. She was moved by it as by a mechanical force.

The South-west wind blew, and the hours of the night were not evil to outcasts. Emilia saw many lying about, getting rest where they might. She hurried her eye pityingly over little children, but the devil that had seized her sprang contempt for the others—older beggars, who appeared to succumb to their fate when they should have lifted their heads up bravely. On she passed from square to market, market to park;

and presently her mind shot an arrow of desire for morning, which was nothing less than hunger beginning to stir. 'When will the shops open?' She tried to cheat herself by replying that she did not care when, but pangs of torment became too rapid for the counterfeit. Her imagination raised the roof from those great rich houses, and laid bare a brilliancy of dish-covers; and if any sharp gust of air touched the nerve in her nostril, it seemed instantaneously charged with the smell of old dinners. 'No,' cried Emilia, 'I dislike anything but plain food.' She quickly gave way, and admitted a craving for dainty morsels. 'One lump of sugar!' she subsequently sighed. But neither sugar nor meat approached her.

Her seat was under trees, between a man and a woman who slanted from her with hidden chins. The chilly dry leaves began to waken, and the sky showed its grey. Hunger had become as a leaden ball in Emilia's chest. She could have eaten eagerly still, but she had no ravenous images of food. Nevertheless, she determined to beg for bread at a baker's shop. Coming into the empty streets again, the dread of exposing her solitary wretchedness and the stains of night upon her, kept her back. When she did venture near the baker's shop, her sensation of weariness, want of washing, and general misery, made her feel a contrast to all other women she saw, that robbed her of the necessary effrontery. She preferred to hide her head.

The morning hours went in this conflict. She was betweenwhiles hungry and desperate, or stricken with shame. Fatigue, bringing the imperious necessity for rest, intervened as a relief. Emilia moaned at the weary length of the light, but when dusk fell and she beheld flame in the lamps, it seemed to be too sudden and she was alarmed. Passive despair had set in. She

felt sick, though not weak, and the thought of asking help had gone.

A street urchin, of the true London species, in whom excess of woollen comforter made up for any marked scantiness in the rest of his attire, came trotting the pavement, pouring one of the favourite tunes of his native metropolis through the tube of a penny-whistle, from which it did not issue so disguised but that attentive ears might pronounce it the royal march of the Cannibal Islands. A placarded post beside a lamp met this musician's eye; and, still piping, he bent his knees and read the notification. Emilia thought of the Hillford and Ipley clubmen, the big drum, the speeches, the cheers, and all the wild strength that lay in her that happy morning. She watched the boy piping as if he were reading from a score, and her sense of humour was touched. 'You foolish boy!' she said to herself softly. But when, having evidently come to the last printed line, the boy rose and pocketed his penny-whistle, Emilia was nearly laughing. 'That 's because he cannot turn over the leaf,' she said, and stood by the post till long after the boy had disappeared. The slight emotion of fun had restored to her some of her lost human sensations, and she looked about for a place where to indulge them undisturbed. One of the bridges was in sight. She yearned for the solitude of the wharf beside it, and hurried to the steps. To descend she had to pass a street-organ and a small figure bent over it. 'Sei buon' Italiano?' she said. The answer was a surly 'Sì.' Emilia cried convulsively 'Addio!' Her brain had become on a sudden vacant of a thought, and all she knew was that she descended.

CHAPTER XLI

SHE IS FOUND

'Sei buon' Italiana ?'

Across what chasm did the words come to her ?

It seemed but a minute, and again many hours back, that she had asked that question of a little fellow, who, if he had looked up and nodded would have given her great joy, but who kept his face dark from her and with a sullen 'Sì' extinguished her last feeling of a desire for companionship with life.

'Sì,' she replied, quite as sullenly, and without looking up.

But when her hand was taken and other words were uttered, she that had crouched there so long between death and life immoveable, loving neither, rose possessed of a passion for the darkness and the void, and struggling bitterly with the detaining hand, crying for instant death. No strength was in her to support the fury.

'Merthyr Powys is with you,' said her friend, 'and will never leave you.'

'Will never take me up there ?' Emilia pointed to the noisy level above them.

'Listen, and I will tell you how I have found you,' replied Merthyr.

'Don't force me to go up.'

She spoke from the end of her breath. Merthyr feared that it was more than misery, even madness, afflicting her. He sat on the wharf-bench silent till she was reassured. But at his first words, the eager question came : 'You will not force me to go up there ?'

'No ; we can stay and talk here,' said Merthyr.

'And this is how I have found you. Do you suppose you have been hidden from us all this time? Perhaps you fancy you do not *belong* to your friends? Well, I spoke to all "your children," as you used to call them. Do you remember? The day before yesterday two had seen you. You said to one, "From Savoy or Piedmont?' He said, "From Savoy"; and you shook your head: "Not looking on Italy!" you said. This night I roused one of them, and he stretched his finger down the steps, saying that you had gone down there. "Sei buon' Italiano?" you said. And that is how I have found you. Sei buon' Italiana?'

Emilia let her hand rest in Merthyr's, wondering to think that there should be no absolute darkness for a creature to escape into while living. A trembling came on her. 'Let me look over at the water,' she said; and Merthyr, who trusted her even in that extremity, allowed her to lean forward, and felt her grasp grow moist in his, till she turned back with shudders, giving him both her hands. 'A drowned woman looks so dreadful!' Her speech was faint as she begged to be taken away from that place. Merthyr put his hand to her arm-pit, sustaining her steps. As they neared the level where men were, she looked behind her and realized the black terrors she had just been blindly handling. Fright sped her limbs for a second or two, and then her whole weight hung upon Merthyr. He held her in both arms, thinking that she had swooned, but she murmured: 'Have you heard that my voice has gone?'

'If you have suffered, I do not wonder,' he said.

'I am useless. My voice is dead.'

'Useless to your friends? Tush, my little Emilia! Sandra mia! Don't you know that while you love your friends that 's all they want of you?'

'Oh!' she moaned; 'the gas-lamp hurts me. What a noise there is!'

'We shall soon get away from the noise.'

'No; I like it; but not the light. Oh, my feet!—why are you walking still? What friends?'

'For instance, myself.'

'You knew of my wandering about London! It makes me believe in heaven. I can't bear to think of being unseen.'

'This morning,' said Merthyr, 'I saw the policeman in whose house you have been staying.'

Emilia bowed her head to the mystery by which this friend was endowed to be cognizant of her actions. 'I feel that I have not seen the streets for years. If it were not for you I should fall down—Oh! do you understand that my voice has quite gone?'

Merthyr perceived her anxiety to be that she might not be taken on doubtful terms. 'Your hand hasn't,' he said, pressing it, and so gratified her with a concrete image of something that she could still bestow upon a friend. To this she clung while the noisy wheels bore her through London, till her weak body failed to keep courage in her breast, and she wept and came closer to Merthyr. He who supposed that her recent despair and present tears were for the loss of her lover, gave happily more comfort than he took. 'When old gentlemen choose to interest themselves about very young ladies,' he called upon his humorous philosophy to observe internally, as men do to forestall the possible cynic external;—and the rest of the sentence was acted under his eyes by the figures of three persons. But there she was, lying within his arm, rescued, the creature whom he had found filling his heart, when lost, and whom he thought one of the most hopeful of the women of earth! He thanked God for bare facts. She lay

against him with her eyelids softly joined, and as he felt the breathing of her body, he marvelled to think how matter-of-fact they had both been on the brink of a tragedy, and how naturally she had, as it were, argued herself up to the gates of death. For want of what? 'My sister may supply it,' thought Merthyr.

'Oh! that river is like a great black snake with a sick eye, and *will* come round me!' said Emilia, talking as from sleep; then started, with fright in her face: 'Oh! my hunger again!'

'Hunger!' said he, horrified.

'It comes worse than ever,' she moaned. 'I was half dead just now, and didn't feel it. There 's—there 's no pain in death. But this—it 's like fire and frost! I feel being eaten up. Give me something.'

Merthyr set his teeth and enveloped her in a tight hug that relieved her from the sharper pangs; and so held her, the tears bursting through his shut eyelids, till at the first hotel they reached he managed to get food for her. She gave a little gasping cry when he put bread through the window of the cab. Bit by bit he handed her the morsels. It was impossible to procure broth. When they drove on, she did not complain of suffering, but her chest rose and fell many times heavily. She threw him out in the reading of her character, after a space, by excusing herself for having eaten with such eagerness; and it was long before he learnt what Wilfrid's tyrannous sentiment had done to this simple nature. He understood better the fear she expressed of meeting Georgiana. Nevertheless, she exhibited none on entering the house, and returned Georgiana's embrace with what strength was left to her.

CHAPTER XLII

DEFECTION OF MR. PERICLES FROM THE BROOKFIELD CIRCLE

Up the centre aisle of Hillford Church, the Tinleys (late as usual) were seen trooping for morning service in mid-winter. There was a man in the rear known to be a man by the sound of his boots and measure of his stride, for the ladies of Brookfield, having rejected the absurd pretensions of Albert Tinley, could not permit curiosity to encounter the risk of meeting his gaze by turning their heads. So, with charitable condescension they returned the slight church nod of prim Miss Tinley passing, of the detestable Laura Tinley, of affected Rose Tinley (whose complexion was that of a dust-bin), and of Madeline Tinley (too young for a character beyond what the name bestowed), and then they arranged their prayer-books, and apparently speculated as to the possible text that morning to be given forth from the pulpit. But it seemed to them all that an exceedingly bulky object had passed as guardian of the light-footed damsels preceding him. Though none of the ladies had looked up as he passed, they were conscious of a stature and a circumference which they had deemed to be entirely beyond the reach of the Tinleys, and a scornful notion of the Tinleys having hired a guardsman, made Arabella smile at the stretch of her contempt, that could help her to conceive the ironic possibility. Relieved of the suspicion that Albert was in attendance on his sisters, they let their eyes fall calmly on the Tinley pew. Could two men upon this earthly sphere possess such a bearskin? There towered the shoulders of

Mr. Pericles; his head looking diminished by the hugeous collar. Arabella felt a seizure of her hand from Adela's side. She placed her book open before her, and stared at the pulpit. From neither of the three of Brookfield could Laura's observation extract a sign of the utter astonishment she knew they must be experiencing; and had it not been for the ingenuous broad whisper of Mrs. Chump, which sounded toward the verge even of her conception of possibilities, the Tinleys would not have been gratified by the first public display of the prize they had wrested from the Poles.

'Mr. Paricles—oh!' went Mrs. Chump, and a great many pews were set in commotion.

Forthwith she bent over Cornelia's lap, and Cornelia, surveying her placidly, had to murmur, 'By and by; by and by.'

'But, did ye see 'm, my dear? and a forr'ner in a Protestant Church! And such a forr'ner as he is, to be sure! And, ye know, ye said he 'd naver come with you, and it 's them creatures ye don't like. Corrnelia!'

'The service commences,' remarked that lady, standing up.

Many eyes were on Mr. Pericles, who occasionally inspected the cornices and corbels and stained glass to right and left, or detected a young lady staring at him, or anticipated her going to stare, and put her to confusion by a sharp turn of his head, and then a sniff and smoothing down of his moustache. But he did not once look at the Brookfield pew. By hazard his eye ranged over it, and after the first performance of this trick he would have found the ladies a match for him, even if he had sought to challenge their eyes. They were constrained to admit that Laura Tinley managed him cleverly. She made him hold a book and appear respectably devout. She got him down in good time when seats

were taken, and up again, without much transparent persuasion. The first notes of the organ were seen to agitate the bearskin. Laura had difficulty to induce the man to rise for the hymn, and when he had listened to the intoning of a verse, Mr. Pericles suddenly bent, as if he had snapped in two : nor could Laura persuade him to rejoin the present posture of the congregation. Then only did Laura, to cover her failure, turn the subdued light of a merry smile upon the Brookfield pew.

The smile was noticed by Apprehension sitting in the corner of one eye, and it was likewise known that Laura's chagrin at finding that she was not being watched affected her visibly. At the termination of the sermon, the ladies bowed their heads a short space, and placing Mrs. Chump in front drove her out, so that her exclamations of wonderment, and affectedly ostentatious gaspings of sympathy for Brookfield, were heard by few. On they hurried, straight and fast to Brookfield. Mr. Pole was talking to Tracy Runningbrook at the gate. The ladies cut short his needless apology to the young man for not being found in church that day, by asking questions of Tracy. The first related to their brother's whereabout ; the second to Emilia's condition. Tracy had no time to reply. Mrs. Chump had identified herself with Brookfield so warmly that the defection of Mr. Pericles was a fine legitimate excitement to her. 'I hate 'm ! ' she cried. 'I pos'tively hate the man ! And he to go to church ! A pretty figure for an angel—he, now ! But, my dears, we cann't let annybody else have 'm. Shorrt of his bein' drowned or killed, we must intrigue to keep the wretch to ourselves.'

'Oh, *dear* ! ' said Adela impatiently.

'Well, and I didn't say to *my*self, ye little jealous thing ! ' retorted Mrs. Chump.

'Indeed, ma'am, you are welcome to him.'

'And indeed, miss, I don't want 'm. And, perhaps, ye were flirtin' all the fun out of him on board the yacht, and got tired of 'm ; and that 's why.'

Adela said : 'Thank you,' with exasperating sedateness, which provoked an intemperate outburst from Mrs. Chump. 'Sunday ! Sunday ! ' cried Mr. Pole.

'Ain't I the first to remember ut, Pole ? And didn't I get up airly so as to go to church and have my conscience qui't, and 'stead of that I come out full of evil passions, all for the sake o' these ungrateful garls that 's always where ye cann't find 'em. Why, if they was to be married at the altar, they 'd stare and be 'ffendud if ye asked them if they was thinking of their husbands, they would ! "Oh, dear, no ! and ye 're mistaken, and we 're thinkin' o' the coal-scuttle in the back parlour,"—or somethin' about souls, if not coals. There 's their answer. What did ye do with Mr. Paricles on board the yacht ? Aha ! '

'What 's this about Pericles ? ' said Mr. Pole.

'Oh, nothing, Papa,' returned Adela.

'Nothing, do ye call ut ! ' said Mrs. Chump. 'And, mayhap, good cause too. Didn't ye tease 'm, now, on board the yacht ? Now, did he go on board the yacht at all ? '

'I should think you ought to know that as well as Adela,' said Mr. Pole.

Adela interposed, hurriedly : 'All this, my dear Papa, is because Mr. Pericles has thought proper to visit the Tinleys' pew. Who would complain how or where he does it, so long as the duty is fulfilled ? '

Mr. Pole stared, muttering : 'The Tinleys ! '

'She 's botherin' of ye, Pole, the puss ! ' said Mrs. Chump, certain that she had hit a weak point in that mention of the yacht. 'Ask her what sorrt of behaviour——'

'And he didn't speak to any of you?' said Mr. Pole.

'No, Papa.'

'He looked the other way?'

'He did us that honour.'

'Ask her, Pole, how she behaved to 'm on board the yacht,' cried Mrs. Chump. 'Oh! there was flirtin', flirtin'! And go and see what the noble poat says of tying up in sacks and plumpin' of poor bodies of women into forty fathoms by them Turks and Greeks, all because of jeal'sy. So, they make a woman in earnest there, the wretches, 'cause she cann't have anny of her jokes. Didn't ye tease Mr. Paricles on board the yacht, Ad'la? Now, was he there?'

'Martha! you 're a fool!' said Mr. Pole, looking the victim of one of his fits of agitation. 'Who knows whether he was there better than you? You 'll be forgetting soon that we 've ever dined together. I hate to see a woman so absurd! There—never mind! Go in: take off bonnet—something—anything! only I can't bear folly! Eh, Mr. Runningbrook?'

''Deed, Pole, and ye 're mad.' Mrs. Chump crossed her hands to reply with full repose. 'I 'd like to know how I 'm to know what I naver said.'

The scene was growing critical. Adela consulted the eyes of her sisters, which plainly said that this was her peculiar scrape. Adela ended it by going up to Mrs. Chump, taking her by the shoulders, and putting a kiss upon her forehead. 'Now you will see better,' she said. 'Don't you know Mr. Pericles was not with us? As surely as he *was* with the Tinleys this morning!'

'And a nice morning it is!' ejaculated Mr. Pole, trotting off hurriedly.

'Does Pole think——' Mrs. Chump murmured, with reference to her voyaging on the yacht. The kiss had bewildered her sequent sensations.

'He does think, and will think, and must think,' Adela prattled some persuasive infantine nonsense: her soul all the while in revolt against her sisters, who left her the work to do, and took the position of spectators and critics, condemning an effort they had not courage to attempt.

'By the way, I have to congratulate a friend of mine,' said Tracy, selecting Adela for an ironical bow.

'Then it *is* Captain Gambier,' cried Mrs. Chump, as if a whole revelation had burst on her. Adela blushed. 'Oh! and what was that I heard?' continued the aggravating woman.

Adela flashed her eyes round on her sisters. Even then they left her without aid, their feeling being that she had debased the house by her familiarity with this woman before Tracy.

'Stay! didn't ye both——' Mrs. Chump was saying.

'Yes?'—Adela passed by her—'only in your ears alone, you know!' At which hint Mrs. Chump gleefully turned and followed her. A rumour was prevalent of some misadventure to Adela and the Captain on board the yacht. Arabella saw her depart, thinking, 'How singular is her propensity to imitate me!' for the affirmative uttered in the tone of interrogation was quite Arabella's own; as also occasionally the negative,—the negative, however, suiting the musical indifference of the sound, and its implied calm breast.

'As for Pericles,' said Tracy, 'you need not wonder that the fellow prays in other pews than yours. By heaven! he may pray and pray: I'd send him to Hades with an epigram in his heart!'

From Tracy the ladies learnt that Wilfrid had inflicted public chastisement upon Mr. Pericles for saying a false thing of Emilia. 'He danced the prettiest *pas seul* that was ever footed by débutant on the hot iron plates of Purgatory.' They dared not ask what it was that Mr.

Pericles had said, but Tracy was so vehement on the subject of his having met his deserts, that they partly guessed it to bear some relation to their sex's defencelessness, and they approved their brother's work.

Sir Twickenham and Captain Gambier dined at Brookfield that day. However astonishing it might be to one who knew his character and triumphs, the Captain was a butterfly netted, and was on the highroad to an exhibition of himself pinned, with his wings outspread. During the service of the table Tracy relieved Adela from Mrs. Chump's inadvertencies and little bits of feminine malice, but he could not help the Captain, who blundered like a schoolboy in her rough hands. It was noted that Sir Twickenham reserved the tolerating smile he once had for her. Mr. Pole's nervous fretfulness had increased. He complained in occasional underbreaths, correcting himself immediately with a 'No, no!' and blinking briskly.

But after dinner came the time when the painfullest scene was daily enacted. Mrs. Chump drank Port freely. To drink it fondly, it was necessary that she should have another rosy wineglass to nod to, and Mr. Pole, whose taste for wine had been weakened, took this post as his duty. The watchful, pinched features of the poor pale little man bloomed unnaturally, and his unintelligible eyes sparkled as he emptied his glass. His daughters knew that he drank, not for his pleasure, but for their benefit; that he might sustain Martha Chump in the delusion that he was a fitting bridegroom, and with her money save them from ruin. Each evening, with remorse that blotted all perception of the tragic comicality of the show, they saw him, in his false strength and his anxiety concerning his pulse's play, act this part. The recurring words, 'Now, Martha, here 's the Port,' sent a cold wave through their blood. They know what

the doctor remarked on the effect of that Port. 'Ill!' Mrs. Chump would cry, when she saw him wink after sipping; 'you, Pole! what do they say of ye, ye deer!' and she returned the wink; the ladies looking on. Not to drink a proper quantum of Port, when Port was on the table, was, in Mrs. Chump's eyes, mean for a man. Even Chump, she would say, was master of his bottle, and thought nothing of it. 'Who does?' cried her present suitor, and the Port ebbed, and his cheeks grew crimson.

This frightful rivalry with the ghost of Alderman Chump continued night after night. The rapturous Martha was incapable of observing that if she drank with a ghost in memory, in reality she drank with nothing better than an animated puppet. The nights ended with Mr. Pole either sleeping in his arm-chair (upon which occasions one daughter watched him and told dreadful tales of his waking), or staggering to bed, debating on the stairs between tea and brandy, complaining of a loss of sensation at his knee-cap, or elbow, or else rubbing his head and laughing hysterically. His bride was not at such moments observant. No wonder Wilfrid kept out of the way, if he had not better occupation elsewhere. The ladies, in their utter anguish, after inveighing against the baneful Port, had begged their father to delay no more to marry the woman. 'Why?' said Mr. Pole, sharply; 'what do you want me to marry her for?' They were obliged to keep up the delusion, and said, 'Because she seems suited to you as a companion.' That satisfied him. 'Oh! we won't be in a hurry,' he said, and named a day within a month; and not liking their unready faces, laughed, and dismissed the idea aloud, as if he had not earnestly been entertaining it.

The ladies of Brookfield held no more their happy, energetic midnight consultations. They had begun to

crave for sleep and a snatch of forgetfulness, the scourge being daily on their flesh : and they had now no plans to discuss ; they had no distant horizon of low vague lights that used ever to be beyond their morrow. They kissed at the bedroom door of one, and separated. Silence was their only protection to the Nice Feelings, now that Fine Shades had become impossible. Adela had almost made herself distinct from her sisters since the yachting expedition. She had grown severely careful of the keys of her writing-desk, and would sometimes slip the bolt of her bedroom door, and answer 'Eh?' dubiously in tone, when her sisters had knocked twice, and had said 'Open' once. The house of Brookfield showed those divisional rents which an admonitory quaking of the earth will create. Neither sister was satisfied with the other. Cornelia's treatment of Sir Twickenham was almost openly condemned, but at the same time it seemed to Arabella that the baronet was receiving more than the necessary amount of consolation from the bride of Captain Gambier, and that yacht habits and moralities had been recently imported to Brookfield. Adela, for her part, looked sadly on Arabella, and longed to tell her, as she told Cornelia, that if she continued to play Freshfield Sumner purposely against Edward Buxley, she might lose both. Cornelia quietly measured accusations and judged impartially ; her mind being too full to bring any personal observations to bear. She said, perhaps, less than she would have said, had she not known that hourly her own Nice Feelings had to put up a petition for Fine Shades : had she not known, indeed, that her conduct would soon demand from her sisters an absolutely merciful interpretation. For she was now simply attracting Sir Twickenham to Brookfield as a necessary medicine to her Papa. Since Mrs. Chump's return, however, Mr. Pole had spoken cheerfully of himself, and, by innuendo

emphasized, had imparted that his mercantile prospects were brighter. In fact, Cornelia half thought that he must have been pretending bankruptcy to gain his end in getting the consent of his daughters to receive the woman. She, and Adela likewise, began to suspect that the parental transparency was a little mysterious, and that there is, after all, more than we see in something that we see through. They were now in danger of supposing that because the old man had possibly deceived them to some extent, he had deceived them altogether. But was not the after-dinner scene too horribly true? Were not his hands moist and cold while the forehead was crimson? And could a human creature feel at his own pulse, and look into vacancy with that intense apprehensive look, and be but an actor? They could not think so. But his conditions being dependent upon them, the ladies felt in their hearts a spring of absolute rebellion when the call for fresh sacrifices came. Though they did not grasp the image, they had a feeling that he was nourished bit by bit by everything they held dear; and though they loved him, and were generous, they had begun to ask, 'What next?'

The ladies were at a dead-lock, and that the heart is the father of our histories, I am led to think when I look abroad on families stagnant because of so weak a motion of the heart. There are those who have none at all; the mass of us are moved from the propulsion of the toes of the Fates. But the ladies of Brookfield had hearts lively enough to get them into scrapes. The getting out of them, or getting on at all, was left to Providence. They were at a dead-lock, for Arabella, flattered as she was by Freshfield Sumner's wooing, could not openly throw Edward over, whom indeed she thought that she liked the better of the two, though his letters had not so wide an intellectual range. Her father was irritably anxious

that she should close with Edward. Adela could not move : at least, not openly. Cornelia might have taken an initiative ; but tenderness for her father's health had hitherto restrained her, and she temporized with Sir Twickenham on the noblest of principles. She was, by the devotion of her conduct, enabled to excuse herself so far that she could even fish up an excuse in the shape of the effort she had made to find him entertaining : as if the said effort should really be repayment enough to him for his assiduous and most futile suit. One deep grief sat on Cornelia's mind. She had heard from Lady Gosstre that there was something like madness in the Barrett family. She had consented to meet Sir Purcell clandestinely (after debate on his claim to such a sacrifice on her part), and if, on those occasions, her lover's tone was raised, it gave her a tremour. And he had of late appeared to lose his noble calm ; he had spoken (it might almost be interpreted) as if he doubted her. Once, when she had mentioned her care for her father, he had cried out upon the name of father with violence, looking unlike himself.

His condemnation of the world, too, was not so Christian as it had been ; it betrayed what the vulgar would call spite, and was not all compassed in his peculiar smooth shrug—expressive of a sort of border-land between contempt and charity : which had made him wear in her sight all the superiority which the former implies, with a considerable share of the benign complacency of the latter. This had gone. He had been sarcastic even to her ; saying once, and harshly : ' Have you a *will* ? ' Personally she liked the poor organist better than the poor baronet, though he had less merit. It was unpleasant in her present mood to be told ' that we have come into this life to fashion for ourselves souls '; and that ' whosoever cannot decide is a soulless wretch fit

but to pass into vapour.' He appeared to have ceased to make his generous allowances for difficult situations. A senseless notion struck Cornelia, that with the baronetcy he had perhaps inherited some of the madness of his father.

The two were in a dramatic tangle of the Nice Feelings : worth a glance as we pass on. She wished to say to him, 'You are unjust to my perplexities'; and he to her, 'You fail in your dilemma through cowardice.' Instead of uttering which, they chid themselves severally for entertaining such coarse ideas of their idol. Doubtless they were silent from consideration for one another : but I must add, out of extreme tenderness for themselves likewise. There are people who can keep the facts that front them absent from their contemplation by not framing them in speech ; and much benevolence of the passive order may be traced to a disinclination to inflict pain upon oneself. 'My duty to my father,' being cited by Cornelia, Sir Purcell had to contend with it.

'True love excludes no natural duty,' she said.

And he : 'Love discerns unerringly what is and what is not duty.'

'In the case of a father, can there be any doubt ?' she asked, the answer shining in her confident aspect.

'There are many things that fathers may demand of us !' he interjected bitterly.

She had a fatal glimpse here of the false light in which his resentment coloured the relations between fathers and children ; and, deeming him incapable of conducting this argument, she felt quite safe in her opposition, up to a point where feeling stopped her.

'Devotedness to a father I must conceive to be a child's first duty,' she said.

Sir Purcell nodded : 'Yes ; a child's !'

'Does not history give the higher praise to children

who sacrifice themselves for their parents?' asked Cornelia.

And he replied: 'So, you seek to be fortified in such matters by history!'

Courteous sneers silenced her. Feeling told her she was in the wrong; but the beauty of her sentiment was not to be contested, and therefore she thought that she might distrust feeling: and she went against it somewhat; at first very tentatively, for it caused pain. She marked a line where the light of duty should not encroach on the light of our human desires. 'But love for a parent is not *merely* duty,' thought Cornelia. 'It is also love;—and is it not the least selfish love?'

Step by step Sir Purcell watched the clouding of her mind with false conceits, and knew it to be owing to the heart's want of vigour. Again and again he was tempted to lay an irreverent hand on the veil his lady walked in, and make her bare to herself. Partly in simple bitterness, he refrained: but the chief reason was that he had no comfort in giving a shock to his own state of deception. He would have had to open a dark closet; to disentangle and bring to light what lay in an undistinguishable heap; to disfigure her to herself, and share in her changed eyesight; possibly to be, or seem, coarse: so he kept the door of it locked, admitting sadly in his meditation that there was such a place, and saying all the while: 'If I were not poor!' He saw her running into the shelter of egregious sophisms, till it became an effort to him to preserve his reverence for her and the sex she represented. Finally he imagined that he perceived an idea coming to growth in her, no other than this: 'That in duty to her father she might sacrifice herself, though still loving him to whom she had given her heart; thus ennobling her love for father and for lover.' With a wicked ingenuity he tracked her forming notions, encouraged them on, and

provoked her enthusiasm by putting an ironical question : 'Whether the character of the soul was subdued and shaped by the endurance and the destiny of the perishable ? '

'Oh ! no, no ! ' she exclaimed. 'It cannot be, or what comfort should we have ? '

Few men knew better that when lovers' sentiments stray away from feeling, they are to be suspected of a disloyalty. Yet he admired the tone she took. He had got an 'ideal' of her which it was pleasanter to magnify than to distort. An 'ideal' is so arbitrary, that if you only doubt of its being perfection, it will vanish and never come again. Sir Purcell refused to doubt. He blamed himself for having thought it possible to doubt, and this, when all the time he knew.

Through endless labyrinths of delusion these two unhappy creatures might be traced, were it profitable. Down what a vale of little intricate follies should we be going, lighted by one ghastly conclusion ! At times, struggling from the midst of her sophisms, Cornelia prayed her lover would claim her openly, and so nerve her to a pitch of energy that would clinch the ruinous debate. Forgetting that she was an 'ideal'—the accredited mistress of pure wisdom and of the power of deciding rightly—she prayed to be dealt with as a thoughtless person, and one of the herd of women. She felt that Sir Purcell threw too much on her. He expected her to go calmly to her father, and to Sir Twickenham, and tell them individually that her heart was engaged ; then with a stately figure to turn, quit the house, and lay her hand in his. He made no allowance for the weakness of her sex, for the difficulties surrounding her, for the consideration due to Sir Twickenham's pride, and to her father's ill-health. She half-protested to herself that he expected from her the mechanical correctness

of a machine, and overlooked the fact that she was human. It was a grave comment on her ambition to be an 'ideal.'

So let us leave them, till we come upon the ashy fruit of which this blooming sentimentalism is the seed.

It was past midnight when Mrs. Chump rushed to Arabella's room, and her knock was heard vociferous at the door. The ladies, who were at work upon diaries and letters, allowed her to thump and wonder whether she had come to the wrong door, for a certain period; after which, Arabella placidly unbolted her chamber, and Adela presented herself in the passage to know the meaning of the noise.

'Oh! ye poor darlin's, I 've heard ut all, I have.'

This commencement took the colour from their cheeks. Arabella invited her inside, and sent Adela for Cornelia.

'Oh, and ye poor *deers*!' cried Mrs. Chump to Arabella, who remarked: 'Pray wait till my sisters come'; causing the woman to stare and observe: 'If ye 're not as cold as the bottom of a pot that naver felt fire.' She repeated this to Cornelia and Adela as an accusation, and then burst on: 'My heart 's just breakin' for ye, and ye shall naver want bread, eh! and roast beef, and my last bottle of Port ye 'll share, though ye 've no ideea what a lot o' thoughts o' poor Chump 's under that cork, and it 'll be a waste on you. Oh! and that monster of a Mr. Paricles that 's got ye in his power and 's goin' to be the rroon of ye—shame to 'm! Your father 's told me; and, oh! my darlin' garls, don't think ut my fault. For, Pole—Pole——'

Mrs. Chump was choked by her grief. The ladies, unbending to some curiosity, eliminated from her gasps and sobs that Mr. Pole had, in the solitude of his library below, accused her of causing the defection of Mr. Pericles, and

traced his possible ruin to it, confessing, that in the way of business, he was at Mr. Pericles' mercy.

'And in such a passion with me!' Mrs. Chump wrung her hands. 'What could I do to Mr. Paricles? He isn't one o' the men that I *can* kiss; and Pole shouldn't wish me. And Pole settin' down his rroon to me! What 'll I do? My dears! I do feel for ye, for I feel I 'd feel myself such a beast, without money, d' ye see? It 's the most horrible thing in the world. It 's like no candle in the darrk. And I, ye know, I know I 'd naver forgive annybody that took *my* money; and what 'll Pole think of me? For oh! ye may call riches temptation, but poverty 's punishment; and I heard a young curate say that from the pulpit, and he was lean enough to know, poor fella!'

Both Cornelia and Arabella breathed more freely when they had heard Mrs. Chump's tale to an end. They knew perfectly well that she was blameless for the defection of Mr. Pericles, and understood from her exclamatory narrative that their father had reason to feel some grave alarm at the Greek's absence from their house, and had possibly reasons of his own for accusing Mrs. Chump, as he had done. The ladies administered consolation to her, telling her that for their part they would never blame her; even consenting to be kissed by her, hugged by her, playfully patted, complimented, and again wept over. They little knew what a fervour of secret devotion they created in Mrs. Chump's bosom by this astounding magnanimity displayed to her, who laboured under the charge of being the source of their ruin; nor could they guess that the little hypocrisy they were practising would lead to any singular and pregnant resolution in the mind of the woman, fraught with explosion to their house, and that quick movement which they awaited.

Mrs. Chump, during the patient strain of a tender hug

of Arabella, had mutely resolved in a great heat of gratitude that she would go to Mr. Pericles, and, since he was necessary to the well-being of Brookfield, bring him back, if she had to bring him back in her arms.

CHAPTER XLIII

IN WHICH WE SEE WILFRID KINDLING

Georgiana Ford to Wilfrid.

'I HAVE omitted replying to your first letter, not because of the nature of its contents: nor do I write now in answer to your second because of the permission you give me to lay it before my brother. I cannot think that concealment is good, save for very base persons; and since you take the initiative in writing very openly, I will do so likewise.

'It is true that Emilia is with me. Her voice is lost, and she has fallen as low in spirit as one can fall and still give us hope of her recovery. But that hope I have, and I am confident that you will not destroy it. In the summer she goes with us to Italy. We have consulted one doctor, who did not prescribe medicine for her. In the morning she reads with my brother. She seems to forget whatever she reads: the occupation is everything necessary just now. Our sharp Monmouth air provokes her to walk briskly when she is out, and the exercise has once or twice given colour to her cheeks. Yesterday being a day of clear frost, we drove to a point from which we could mount the Buckstone, and here, my brother says, the view appeared to give her something of her lost animation. It was a look that I had never seen, and it soon went: but in the evening she asked me whether I

prayed before sleeping, and when she retired to her bed-room, I remained there with her for a time.

'You will pardon me for refusing to let her know that you have written to your relative in the Austrian service to obtain a commission for you. But, on the other hand, I have thought it right to tell her incidentally that you will be married in the Summer of this year. I can only say that she listened quite calmly.

'I beg that you will not blame yourself so vehemently. By what you do, her friends may learn to know that you regret the strange effect produced by certain careless words, or conduct: but I cannot find that self-accusation is ever good at all. In answer to your question, I may add that she has repeated nothing of what she said when we were together in Devon.

'Our chief desire (for, as we love her, we may be directed by our instinct), in the attempt to restore her, is to make her understand that she is anything but worthless. She has recently followed my brother's lead, and spoken of herself, but with a touch of scorn. This morning, while the clear frosty sky continues, we were to have started for an old castle lying toward Wales; and I think the idea of a castle must have struck her imagination, and forced some internal contrast on her mind. I am repeating my brother's suggestion—she seemed more than usually impressed with an idea that she was of no value to anybody. She asked why she should go anywhere, and dropped into a chair, begging to be allowed to stay in a darkened room. My brother has some strange intuition of her state of mind. She has lost any power she may have had of grasping abstract ideas. In what I conceived to be play, he told her that many would buy her even now. She appeared to be speculating on this, and then wished to know how much those persons would consider her

to be worth, and who they were. Nor did it raise a smile on her face to hear my brother mention Jews, and name an absolute sum of money ; but, on the contrary, after evidently thinking over it, she rose up, and said that she was ready to go. I write fully to you, telling you these things, that you may see she is at any rate eager not to despair, and is learning, much as a child might learn it, that it need not be.

'Believe me, that I will in every way help to dispossess your mind of the remorse now weighing upon you, as far as it shall be within my power to do so.

'Mr. Runningbrook has been invited by my brother to come and be her companion. They have a strong affection for one another. He is a true poet, full of reverence for a true woman.'

Wilfrid to Georgiana Ford.

'I cannot thank you enough. When I think of her I am unmanned ; and if I let my thoughts fall back upon myself, I am such as you saw me that night in Devon—helpless, and no very presentable figure. But you do not picture her to me. I cannot imagine whether her face has changed ; and, pardon me, were I writing to you alone, I could have faith that the delicate insight and angelic nature of a woman would not condemn my desire to realize before my eyes the state she has fallen to. I see her now under a black shroud. Have her features changed ? I cannot remember one—only at an interval her eyes. Does she look into the faces of people as she used ? Or does she stare carelessly away ? Softly between the eyes, is what I meant. I mean—but my reason for this particularity is very simple. I would state it to you, and to no other. I cannot have peace till she is restored ; and my prayer

is, that I may not haunt her to defeat your labour. Does her face appear to show that I am quite absent from her thoughts? Oh! you will understand me. You have seen me stand and betray no suffering when a shot at my forehead would have been mercy. To you I will dare to open my heart. I wish to be certain that I have not injured her—that is all. Perhaps I am more guilty than you think: more even than I can call to mind. If I may judge by the punishment, my guilt is immeasurable. Tell me—if you will but tell me that the sacrifice of my life to her will restore her, it is hers. Write, and say this, and I will come. Do not delay or spare me. Her dumb voice is like a ghost in my ears. It cries to me that I have killed it. Be actuated by no charitable considerations in refraining to write. Could a miniature of her be sent? You will think the request strange; but I want to be sure she is not haggard—not the hospital face I fancy now, which accuses me of murder. Does she preserve the glorious freshness she used to wear? She had a look—or did you see her before the change? I only want to know that she is *well.*'

Tracy Runningbrook to Wilfrid.

'You had my promise that I would write and give your conscience a nightcap. I have a splendid one for you. Put it on without any hesitation. I find her quite comfortable. Powys reads Italian with her in the morning. His sister (who might be a woman if she liked, but has an insane preference for celestial neutrality) does the moral inculcation. The effect is comical. I should like you to see Cold Steel leading Tame Fire about, and imagining the taming to be her work! You deserve well of your generation. You just did enough to set this darling girl alight. Knights

and squires numberless will thank you. The idea of your reproaching yourself is monstrous. Why, there 's no one thanks you more than she does. You stole her voice, which some may think a pity, but I don't, seeing that I would rather have her in a salon than before the footlights. Imagine my glory in her !—she has become *half cat* ! She moves softly, as if she loved everything she touched ; making you throb to feel the little ball of her foot. Her eyes look steadily, like green jewels before the veil of an Egyptian temple. Positively, her eyes have grown green—or greenish ! They were darkish hazel formerly, and talked more of milkmaids and chattering pastorals than a discerning master would have wished. Take credit for the change ; and at least *I* don't blame you for the tender hollows under the eyes, sloping outward, just hinted . . . Love's mark on her, so that men's hearts may faint to know that love is known to her, and burn to read her history. When she is about to speak, the upper lids droop a very little ; or else the under-lids quiver upward—I know not which. Take further credit for her manner. She has now a manner of her own. Some of her naturalness has gone, but she has skipped clean over the " young lady " stage ; from raw girl she has really got as much of the great manner as a woman can have who is not an ostensibly retired dowager, or a matron on a pedestal shuffling the naked virtues and the decorous vices together. She looks at you with an immense, marvellous gravity, before she replies to you—enveloping you in a velvet light. This is fact, not fine stuff, my dear fellow. The light of her eyes does absolutely cling about you. Adieu ! You are a great master, and know exactly when to make your bow and retire. A little more, and you would have spoilt her. Now she is perfect.'

Wilfrid to Tracy Runningbrook.

'I have just come across a review of your last book, and send it, thinking you may wish to see it. I have put a query to one of the passages, which I think misquoted: and there will be no necessity to call your attention to the critic's English. You can afford to laugh at it, but I confess it puts your friends in a rage. Here are a set of fellows who arm themselves with whips and stand in the public thoroughfare to make any man of real genius run the gauntlet down their ranks till he comes out flayed at the other extremity! What constitutes their right to be there?—By the way, I met Sir Purcell Barrett (the fellow who was at Hillford), and he would like to write an article on you that should act as a sort of rejoinder. You won't mind, of course—it 's bread to him, poor devil! I doubt whether I shall see you when you come back, so write a jolly lot of letters. Colonel Pierson, of the Austrian army, my uncle (did you meet him at Brookfield?), advises me to sell out immediately. He is getting me an Imperial commission—cavalry. I shall give up the English service. And if they want my medal, they can have it, and I 'll begin again. I 'm sick of everything except a cigar and a good volume of poems. Here 's to light one, and now for the other!

'"Large eyes lit up by some imperial sin,"' etc.

(*Ten lines from Tracy's book are here copied neatly.*)

Tracy Runningbrook to Wilfrid.

'Why the deuce do you write me such infernal trash about the opinions of a villanous dog who can't even pen a decent sentence? I 've been damning you for a white-livered Austrian up and down the house. Let the fellow bark till he froths at the mouth, and scatters the virus

of the beast among his filthy friends. I am mad-dog proof. The lines you quote were written in an awful hurry, coming up in the train from Richford one morning. You have hit upon my worst with commendable sagacity. If it will put money in Barrett's pocket, let him write. I should prefer to have nothing said. The chances are all in favour of his writing like a fool. If you 're going to be an Austrian, we may have a chance of shooting one another some day, so here 's my hand before you go and sell your soul ; and anything I can do in the meantime—command me.'

Georgiana Ford to Wilfrid.

'I do not dare to charge you with a breach of your pledged word. Let me tell you simply that Emilia has become aware of your project to enter the Austrian service, and it has had the effect on her which I foresaw. She could bear to hear of your marriage, but this is too much for her, and it breaks my heart to see her. It is too cruel. She does not betray any emotion, but I can see that every principle she had gained is gone, and that her bosom holds the shadows of a real despair. I foresaw it, and sought to guard her against it. That you, whom she has once called (to me) her lover, should enlist himself as an enemy of her country !—it comes to her as a fact striking her brain dumb while she questions it, and the poor body has nothing to do but to ache. Surely you could have no object in doing this ? I will not suspect it. Mr. Runningbrook is acquainted with your plans, I believe ; but he has no remembrance of having mentioned this one to Emilia. He distinctly assures me that he has not done so, and I trust him to speak truth. How can it have happened ? But here is the evil done. I see no remedy. I am not skilled in sketch-

ing the portraits you desire of her, and yet, if you have ever wished her to know this miserable thing, it would be as well that you should see the different face that has come among us within twenty hours.'

Wilfrid to Georgiana Ford.

'I will confine my reply to a simple denial of having caused this fatal intelligence to reach her ears; for the truth of which, I pledge my honour as a gentleman. A second's thought would have told me—indeed I at once acquiesced in your view—that she should not know it. How it has happened it is vain to attempt to guess. Can you suppose that I desired her to hate me? Yet this is what the knowledge of the step I am taking will make her do! If I could see—if I might see her for five minutes, I should be able to explain everything, and, I sincerely think (painful as it would be to me), give her something like peace. It is too late even to wish to justify myself; but her I can persuade that she——do you not see that her mind is still unconvinced of my—I will call it baseness! Is this the self-accusing you despise? A little of it must be heard. If I may see her I will not fail to make her understand my position. She shall see that it is I who am worthless—not she! You know the circumstances under which I last beheld her—when I saw pang upon pang smiting her breast from my silence! But now I may speak. Do not be prepossessed against my proposal. It shall be only for five minutes—no more. Not that it is my desire to come. In truth, it could not be. I have felt that I alone can cure her—I who did the harm. Mark me: she will fret secretly——, but dear and kindest lady, do not smile too critically at the tone I adopt. I cannot tell how I am writing or what saying. Believe me that I am deeply and con-

stantly sensible of your generosity. In case you hesitate, I beg you to consult Mr. Powys.'

Georgiana Ford to Wilfrid.

'I had no occasion to consult my brother to be certain that an interview between yourself and Emilia should not take place. There can be no object, even if the five minutes of the meeting gave her happiness, why the wound of the long parting should be again opened. She is wretched enough now, though her tenderness for us conceals it as far as possible. When some heavenly light shall have penetrated her, she will have a chance of peace. The evil is not of a nature to be driven out by your hands. If you are *not* going into the Austrian service, she shall know as much immediately. Otherwise, be as dead to her as you may, and your noblest feelings cannot be shown under any form but that.'

Wilfrid to Tracy Runningbrook.

'Some fellows whom I know want you to write a prologue to a play they are going to get up. It 's about Shakespeare—at least, the proceeds go to something of that sort. Do, like a good fellow, toss us off twenty lines. Why don't you write? By the way, I hope there 's no truth in a report that has somehow reached me, that they have the news down in Monmouth of my deserting to the black-yellow squadrons? Of course, such a thing as that should have been kept from *them*. I hear, too, that your—I suppose I must call her now *your*—pupil is falling into bad health. Think me as cold and "British" as you like; but the thought of this does really affect me painfully. Upon my honour, it does! "And now he yawns!" you 're saying. You 're wrong. We Army men feel just as

you poets do, and for a longer time, I think, though perhaps not so acutely. I send you the "Venus" cameo which you admired. Pray accept it from an old friend. I mayn't see you again.'

Tracy Runningbrook to Wilfrid
(*enclosing lines*).

'Here they are. It will require a man who knows something about metre to speak them. *Had* Shakespeare's grandmother three Christian names? and *did* she anticipate feminine posterity in her rank of life by saying habitually, "Drat it"? There is as yet no Society to pursue this investigation, but it should be started. Enormous thanks for the Venus. I wore it this morning at breakfast. Just as we were rising, I leaned forward to her, and she jumped up with her eyes under my chin. "Isn't she a beauty?" I said. "It was his," she answered, changeing eyes of eagle for eyes of dove, and then put out the lights. I had half a mind to offer it, on the spot. May I? That is to say, if the impulse seizes me I take nobody's advice, and fair Venus certainly is not under my chin at this moment. As to ill health, great mother Nature has given a house of iron to this soul of fire. The windows may blaze, or the windows may be extinguished, but the house stands firm. When you are lightning or earthquake, you may have something to reproach yourself for; as it is, be under no alarm. Do not put words in my mouth that I have not uttered. "And now he yawns," is what I shall say of you only when I am sure you have just heard a good thing. You really are the best fellow of your set that I have come across, and the only one pretending to brains. Your modesty in estimating your value as a leader of

Pandours will be pleasing to them who like that modesty. Good-bye. This little Emilia is a marvel of flying moods. Yesterday she went about as if she said, "I 've promised Apollo not to speak till to-morrow." To-day, she 's in a feverish gabble—or began the day with a burst of it; and now she 's soft and sensible. If you fancy a girl at her age being able to see, that it 's a woman's duty to herself and the world to be artistic—to perfect the thing of beauty she is meant to be by nature!—and, seeing, too, that Love is an instrument like any other thing, and that me must play on it with considerate gentleness, and that tearing at it or dashing it to earth, making it howl and quiver, is madness, and not love!—I assure you she begins to see it! She does see it. She is going to wear a wreath of black briony (preserved and set by Miss Ford, a person cunning in these matters). She 's going to the ball at Penarvon Castle, and will look—supply your favourite slang word. A little more experience, and she will have *malice*. She wants nothing but that to make her consummate. Malice is the barb of beauty. She 's just at present a trifle blunt. She will knock over, but not transfix. I am anxious to watch the effect she produces at Penarvon. Poor little woman! I paid a compliment to her eyes. "I 've got nothing else," said she. Dine as well as you can while you are in England. German cookery is an education for the sentiment of hogs. The play of sour and sweet, and crowning of the whole with fat, shows a people determined to go *down* in civilization, and try the business backwards. Adieu, curst Croat! On the Wallachian border mayst thou gather philosophy from meditation.'

CHAPTER XLIV

ON THE HIPPOGRIFF IN AIR: IN WHICH THE PHILOSOPHER HAS A SHORT SPELL

DEXTEROUSLY as Wilfrid had turned Tracy to his uses by means of the foregoing correspondence, in doing so he had exposed himself to the retributive poison administered by that cunning youth. And now the Hippogriff seized him, and mounted with him into mid-air; not as when the idle boy Ganymede was caught up to act as cup-bearer in celestial Courts, but to plunge about on yielding vapours, with nothing near him save the voice of his desire.

The Philosopher here peremptorily demands the pulpit. We are subject, he says, to fantastic moods, and shall dry ready-minted phrases picture them forth? As, for example, can the words 'delirium,' or 'frenzy,' convey an image of Wilfrid's state, when his heart began to covet Emilia again, and his sentiment not only interposed no obstacle, but trumpeted her charms and fawned for her, and he thought her lost, remembered that she had been his own, and was ready to do any madness to obtain her? 'Madness' is the word that hits the mark, but it does not fully embrace the meaning. To be in this state, says the Philosopher, is to be ON THE HIPPOGRIFF; and to this, as he explains, the persons who travel to Love by the road of sentiment will come, if they have any stuff in them, and if the one who kindles them is mighty. He distinguishes being on the Hippogriff from being possessed by passion. Passion, he says, is *noble strength on fire*, and points to Emilia as a representation of passion. She asks for

what she thinks she may have; she claims what she imagines to be her own. She has no shame, and thus, believing in, she never violates, nature, and offends no law, wild as she may seem. Passion does not turn on her and rend her when it is thwarted. She was never carried out of the limit of her own intelligent force, seeing that it directed her always, with the simple mandate to seek that which belonged to her. She was perfectly sane, and constantly just to herself, until the failure of her voice, telling her that she was a beggar in the world, came as a second blow, and partly scared her reason. Constantly just to herself, mind! This is the quality of true passion. Those who make a noise, and are not thus distinguishable, are on Hippogriff.

—By which it is clear to me that my fantastic Philosopher means to indicate the lover mounted in this wise, as a creature bestriding an extraneous power. 'The sentimentalist,' he says, 'goes on accumulating images and hiving sensations, till such time as (if the stuff be in him) they assume a form of vitality, and hurry him headlong. This is not passion, though it amazes men, and does the madder thing.'

In fine, it is Hippogriff. And right loath am I to continue my partnership with a fellow who will not see things on the surface, and is, as a necessary consequence, blind to the fact that the public detest him. I mean, this garrulous, super-subtle, so-called Philosopher, who first set me upon the building of THE THREE VOLUMES, it is true, but whose stipulation that he should occupy so large a portion of them has made them rock top-heavy, to the forfeit of their stability. He maintains that a story should not always flow, or, at least, not to a given measure. When we are knapsack on back, he says, we come to eminences where a survey of our journey past and in advance is desireable,

as is a distinct pause in any business, here and there. He points proudly to the fact that our people in this comedy move themselves,—are moved from their own impulsion,—and that no arbitrary hand has posted them to bring about any event and heap the catastrophe. In vain I tell him that he is meantime making tatters of the puppets' golden robe—illusion: that he is sucking the blood of their warm humanity out of them. He promises that when Emilia is in Italy he will retire altogether; for there is a field of action, of battles and conspiracies, nerve and muscle, where life fights for plain issues, and he can but sum results. Let us, he entreats, be true to time and place. In our fat England, the gardener Time is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them? If we are to understand our species, and mark the progress of civilization at all, we must. Thus the Philosopher. Our partner is our master, and I submit, hopefully looking for release with my Emilia, in the day when Italy reddens the sky with the banners of a land revived.

I hear Wilfrid singing out that he is aloft, burning to rush ahead, while his beast capers in one spot, abominably ludicrous. This trick of Hippogriff is peculiar, viz., that when he loses all faith in himself, he sinks—in other words, goes to excesses of absurd humility to regain it. Passion has likewise its panting intervals, but does nothing so preposterous. The wreath of black briony, spoken of by Tracy as the crown of Emilia's forehead, had begun to glow with a furnace-colour in Wilfrid's fancy. It worked a Satanic distraction in him. The girl sat before him swathed in a darkness, with the edges of the briony leaves shining deadly-radiant above—young Hecate! The next instant he was bleeding with pity for her, aching with remorse,

and again stung to intense jealousy of all who might behold her (amid a reserve of angry sensations at her present happiness).

Why had she not made allowance for his miserable situation that night in Devon? Why did she not comprehend his difficulties in relation to his father's affairs? Why did she not *know* that he could not fail to love her for ever?

Interrogations such as these were so many switches of the whip in the flanks of Hippogriff.

Another peculiarity of the animal gifted with wings is, that around the height he soars to he can see no barriers nor any of the fences raised by men. And here again he differs from Passion, which may tug against common sense but is never, in a great nature, divorced from it. In air on Hippogriff, desires wax boundless, obstacles are hidden. It seemed nothing to Wilfrid (after several tremendous descents of humility) that he should hurry for Monmouth away, to gaze on Emilia under her fair, infernal, bewitching wreath; nothing that he should put an arm round her; nothing that he should forthwith carry her off, though he died for it. Forming no design beyond that of setting his eyes on her, he turned the head of Hippogriff due Westward.

CHAPTER XLV

ON THE HIPPOGRIFF ON EARTH

Penarvon Castle lay over the borders of Monmouthshire. Thither, on a night of frosty moonlight, troops of carriages were hurrying with the usual freightage for a country Ball:—the squire who will not make himself

happy by seeing that his duty to the softer side of his family must be performed during the comfortable hours when bachelors snooze in arm-chairs, and his nobler dame who, not caring for Port or tobacco, cheerfully accepts the order of things as bequeathed to her: the everlastingly half-satisfied young man, who looks forward to the hour when his cigar-light will shine; and the damsel thrice demure as a cover for her eagerness. Within a certain distance of one of the carriages, a man rode on horseback. The court of the castle was reached, and he turned aside, lingering to see whether he could get a view of the lighted steps. To effect his object, he dismounted and led his horse through the gates, turning from gravel to sward, to keep in the dusk. A very agile middle-aged gentleman was the first to appear under the portico-lamps, and he gave his hand to a girl of fifteen, and then to a most portly lady in a scarlet mantle. The carriage-door slammed and drove off, while a groan issued from the silent spectator. 'Good heavens! have I followed these horrible people for five-and-twenty miles!' Carriage after carriage rattled up to the steps, was disburdened of still more 'horrible people' to him, and went the way of the others. 'I shan't see her, after all,' he cried hoarsely, and mounting, said to the beast that bore him, 'Now go sharp.'

Whether you recognize the rider of Hippogriff or not, this is he; and the poor livery-stable screw stretched madly till wind failed, when he was allowed to choose his pace. Wilfrid had come from London to have sight of Emilia in the black-briony wreath: to see her, himself unseen, and go. But he had not seen her; so he had the full excuse to continue the adventure. He rode into a Welsh town, and engaged a fresh horse for the night.

'She won't sing, at all events,' thought Wilfrid, to

comfort himself, before the memory that she could not, in any case, touched springs of weakness and pitying tenderness. From an eminence to which he walked outside the town, Penarvon was plainly visible with all its lighted windows.

'But I will pluck her from you!' he muttered, in a spasm of jealousy; the image of himself as an outcast against the world that held her, striking him with great force at that moment.

'I must give up the Austrian commission, if she takes me.'

And be what? For he had sold out of the English service, and was to receive the money in a couple of days. How long would the money support him? It would not pay half his debts! What, then, did this pursuit of Emilia mean? To blink this question, he had to give the spur to Hippogriff. It meant (upon Hippogriff at a brisk gallop), that he intended to live for her, die for her, if need be, and carve out of the world all that she would require. Everything appears possible, on Hippogriff, when he is going; but it is a bad business to put the spur on so willing a beast. When he does not go of his own will;—when *he* sees that there are obstructions, it is best to jump off his back. And we should abandon him then, save that having once tasted what he can do for us, we become enamoured of the habit of going keenly, and defying obstacles. Thus do we begin to corrupt the uses of the gallant beast (for he is a gallant beast, though not of the first order); we spoil his instincts and train him to hurry us to perdition.

'If my sisters could see me now!' thought Wilfrid, half-smitten with a distant notion of a singularity in his position there, the mark for a frosty breeze, while his eyes kept undeviating watch over Penarvon.

After a time he went back to the inn, and got among coachmen and footmen, all battling lustily against the frost with weapons scientifically selected at the bar. They thronged the passages, and lunged hearty punches at one another, drank and talked, and only noticed that a gentleman was in their midst when he moved to get a light. One complained that he had to drive into Monmouth that night, by a road that sent him five miles out of his way, owing to a block—a great stone that had fallen from the hill. 'You can't ask 'em to get out and walk ten steps,' he said; 'or there! I 'd lead the horses and just tip up the off wheels, and round the place in a twinkle, pop 'em in again, and nobody hurt; but you can't ask ladies to risk catchin' colds for the sake of the poor horses.'

Several coachmen spoke upon this, and the shame and marvel it was that the stone had not been moved; and between them the name of Mr. Powys was mentioned, with the remark that he would spare his beasts if he could.

'What 's that block you 're speaking of, just out of Monmouth?' inquired Wilfrid; and it being described to him, together with the exact bearings of the road and situation of the mass of stone, he at once repeated a part of what he had heard in the form of the emphatic interrogation, 'What! there?' and flatly told the coachman that the stone had been moved.

'It wasn't moved this morning, then, sir,' said the latter.

'No; but a great deal can be done in a couple of hours,' said Wilfrid.

'Did you see 'em at work, sir?'

'No; but I came that way, and the road was clear.'

'The deuce it was!' ejaculated the coachman, willingly convinced.

'And that 's the way I shall return,' added Wilfrid.

He tossed some money on the bar to aid in warming the assemblage, and received numerous salutes as he passed out.

His heart was beating fast. 'I shall see her, in the teeth of my curst luck,' he thought, picturing to himself the blessed spot where the mass of stone would lie; and to that point he galloped, concentrating all the light in his mind on this maddest of chances, till it looked sound, and finally certain.

'It 's certain, if that 's not a hired coachman,' he calculated. 'If he is, he won't risk his fee. If he isn't, he 'll feel on the safe side anyhow. At any rate, it 's my only chance.' And away he flew between glimmering slopes of frost to where a white curtain of mist hung across the wooded hills of the Wye.

CHAPTER XLVI

RAPE OF THE BLACK-BRIONY WREATH

Emilia was in skilful hands, and against anything less powerful than a lover mounted upon Hippogriff, might have been shielded. What is poison to most girls, Merthyr prescribed for her as medicine. He nourished her fainting spirit upon vanity. In silent astonishment Georgiana heard him address speeches to her such as dowagers who have seen their day can alone of womankind complacently swallow. He encouraged Tracy Runningbrook to praise the face of which she had hitherto thought shyly. Jewels were placed at her disposal, and dresses laid out cunningly suited to her complexion. She had a maid to wait on her, who

gabbled at the momentous hours of robing and unrobing : 'Oh, miss! of all the dark young ladies I ever see!' —Emilia was the most bewitching. By-and-by, Emilia was led to think of herself; but with a struggle and under protest. How could it be possible that she was so very nice to the eye, and Wilfrid had abandoned her? The healthy spin of young new blood turned the wheels of her brain, and then she thought: 'Perhaps I am really growing handsome?' The maid said artfully of her hair: 'If gentlemen could only see it *down*, miss! It 's the longest, and thickest, and blackest, I ever touched!' And so saying, slid her fingers softly through it after the comb, and thrilled the owner of that hair till soft thoughts made her bosom heave, and then self-love began to be sensibly awakened, followed by self-pity, and some further form of what we understand as consciousness. If partially a degradation of her nature, this saved her mind from true despair when it began to stir after the vital shock that had brought her to earth. 'To what purpose should I be fair?' was a question that did not yet come to her; but it was sweet to see Merthyr's eyes gather pleasure from the light of her own. Sweet, though nothing more than coldly sweet. She compared herself to her father's old broken violin, that might be mended to please the sight; but would never give the tones again. Sometimes, if hope tormented her, she would strangle it by trying her voice: and such a little piece of self-inflicted anguish speedily undid all Merthyr's work. He was patient as one who tends a flower in the Spring. Georgiana marvelled that the most sensitive and proud of men should be striving to uproot an image from the heart of a simple girl, that he might place his own there. His methods almost led her to think that his estimate of human nature was falling low. Nevertheless, she

was constrained to admit that there was no diminution of his love for her, and it chastened her to think so. 'Would it be the same with me, if I——?' she half framed the sentence, blushing remorsefully while she denied that anything could change her great love for her brother. She had caught a glimpse of Wilfrid's suppleness and selfishness. Contrasting him with Merthyr, she was singularly smitten with shame, she knew not why.

The anticipation of the ball at Penarvon Castle had kindled very little curiosity in Emilia's bosom. She seemed to herself a machine; 'one of the rest'; and looked more to see that she was still coveted by Merthyr's eyes than at the glitter of the humming saloons. A touch of her old gladness made her smile when Captain Gambier unexpectedly appeared and walked across the dancers to sit beside her. She asked him why he had come from London: to which he replied, with a most expressive gaze under her eyelids, that he had come for one object. 'To see me?' thought Emilia, wondering, and reddening as she ceased to wonder. She had thought as a child, and the next instant felt as a woman. He finished Merthyr's work for him. Emilia now thought: 'Then I must be worth something.' And with 'I am,' she ended her meditation, glowing. He might have said that she had all beauty ever showered upon woman: she would have been led to believe him at that moment of her revival.

Now, Lady Charlotte had written to Georgiana, telling her that Captain Gambier was soon to be expected in her neighbourhood, and adding that it would be as well if she looked closely after her charge. When Georgiana saw him go over to Emilia she did not remember this warning: but when she perceived the sudden brilliancy

and softness in Emilia's face after the first words had fallen on her ears, she grew alarmed, knowing his reputation, and executed some diversions, which separated them. The captain made no effort to perplex her tactics, merely saying that he should call in a day or two. Merthyr took to himself all the credit of the visible bloom that had come upon Emilia, and pacing with her between the dances, said: 'Now you will come to Italy, I think.'

She paused before answering. 'Now?' and feverishly continued: 'Yes; at once. I will go. I have almost felt my voice again to-night.'

'That 's well. I shall write to Marini to-morrow. You will soon find your voice if you will not fret for it. Touch Italy!'

'Yes; but you must be near me,' said Emilia.

Georgiana heard this, and could not conceive other than that Emilia was growing to be one of those cormorant creatures who feed alike on the homage of noble and ignoble. She was critical, too, of that very assured pose of Emilia's head and firm planting of her feet as the girl paraded the room after the dances in which she could not join. Previous to this evening, Georgiana had seen nothing of the sort in her; but, on the contrary, a doubtful droop of the shoulders and an unwilling gaze, as of a soul submerged in internal hesitations. 'I earnestly trust that this is a romantic folly of Merthyr's, and no more,' thought Georgiana, who would have had that view concerning his love for Italy likewise, if recollection of her own share of adventure there had not softly interposed.

Tracy, Georgiana, Merthyr, and Emilia were in the carriage, well muffled up, with one window open to the white mist. Emilia was eager to thank her friend, if only for the physical relief from weariness and sluggish-

ness which she was experiencing. She knew certainly that the dim light of a recovering confidence in herself was owing, all, to him, and burned to thank him. Once on the way their hands touched, and he felt a shy pressure from her fingers as they parted. Presently the carriage stopped abruptly, and listening they heard the coachman indulge his companion outside with the remark that they were a couple of fools, and were now regularly 'dished.'

'I don't see why that observation can't go on wheels,' said Tracy.

Merthyr put out his head, and saw the obstruction of the mass of stone across the road. He alighted, and together with the footman, examined the place to see what the chance was of their getting the carriage past. After a space of waiting, Georgiana clutched the wraps about her throat and head, and impetuously followed her brother, as her habit had always been. Emilia sat upright, saying, 'I must go too.' Tracy moaned a petition to her to rest and be comfortable while the Gods were propitious. He checked her with his arm, and tried to pacify her by giving a description of the scene. The coachman remained on his seat. Merthyr, Georgiana, and the footman were on the other side of the rock, measuring the place to see whether, by a partial ascent of the sloping rubble down which it had bowled, the carriage might be got along.

'Go; they have gone round; see whether we can give any help,' said Emilia to Tracy, who cried: 'My goodness! what help can we give? This is an express situation where the Fates always appear in person and move us on. We 're sure to be moved, if we show proper faith in them. This is my attitude of invocation.' He curled his legs up on the seat, resting his head on an arm; but seeing Emilia preparing for a jump he started

up, and immediately preceded her. Emilia looked out after him. She perceived a figure coming stealthily from the bank. It stopped, and again advanced, and now ran swiftly down. She drew back her head as it approached the open door of the carriage; but the next moment trembled forward, and was caught with a cat-like clutch upon Wilfrid's breast.

'Emilia! my own for ever! I swore to die this night if I did not see you!'

'You love me, Wilfrid? love me?'

'Come with me now?'

'Now?'

'Away! with me! your lover!'

'Then you love me!'

'I love you! Come!'

'Now? I cannot move.'

'I am out in the night without you.'

'Oh, my lover! Oh, Wilfrid!'

'Come to me!'

'My feet are dead!'

'It 's too late!'

A sturdy hulloa! sounding from the coachman made Merthyr's ears alive. When he returned he found Emilia huddled up on the seat, alone, her face in her hands, and the touch of her hands like fire. He had to entreat her to descend, and in helping her to alight bore her whole weight, and supported her in a sad wonder, while the horses were led across the rubble, and the carriage was with difficulty, and some confusions, guided to clear its wheels of the obstructing mass. Emilia persisted in saying that nothing ailed her; and to the coachman, who could have told him something, and was willing to have done so (notwithstanding a gold fee for silence that stuck in his palm), Merthyr put no question.

As they were taking their seats in the carriage again, Georgiana said, 'Where is your wreath, Sandra?'

The black-briony wreath was no longer on her head.

'Then, it wasn't a dream!' gasped Emilia, feeling at her temples.

Georgiana at once fell into a scrutinizing coldness, and when Merthyr, who fancied the wreath might have fallen as he was lifting Emilia from the carriage, proposed to go and search the place for it, his sister laid her fingers on his arm, remarking, 'You will not find it, dear'; and Emilia cried: 'Oh! no, no! it is not there'; and with her hands pressed hard against her bosom, sat fixed and silent.

Out of this mood she issued with looks of such tenderness, that one who watched her, speculating on her character as Merthyr did, could see that in some mysterious way she had been during the few minutes that separated them, illumined upon the matter nearest her heart. Was it her own strength, inspired by some sublime force, that had sprung up suddenly to eject a worthless love? So he hoped in despite of whispering reason, till Georgiana spoke to him.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE CALL TO ACTION

When the force of Wilfrid's embrace had died out from her body, Emilia conceived wilfully that she had seen an apparition, so strange, sudden, and wild had been his coming and going: but her whole body was a song to her. 'He is not false: he is true.' So dimly, however, was the 'he' now fashioned in her brain,

and so like a thing of the air had he descended on her, that she almost conceived the abstract idea, 'Love is true,' and possibly, though her senses did not touch on it to shape it, she had the reflection in her: 'After all, power is mine to bring him to my side.' Almost it seemed to her that she had brought him from the grave. She sat hugging herself in the carriage, hating to hear words, and seeing a ball of fire away in the white mist. Georgiana looked at her no more; and when Tracy remarked that he had fancied having seen a fellow running up the bank, she said quietly, 'Did you?'

'Robert must have seen him, too,' added Merthyr, and so the interloper was dismissed.

On reaching home, no sooner were they in the hall than Emilia called for her bed-room candle in a thin, querulous voice that made Tracy shout with laughter and love of her quaintness.

Emilia gave him her hand, and held up her mouth to kiss Georgiana, but no cheek was bent forward for the salute. The girl passed from among them, and then Merthyr said to his sister: 'What is the matter?'

'Surely, Merthyr, you should not be at a loss,' she answered, in a somewhat unusual tone, that was half irony.

Merthyr studied her face. Alone with her, he said: 'I could almost suppose that she has seen this man.'

Georgiana smiled sadly. 'I have not seen him, dear; and she has not told me so.'

'You think it was so?'

'I can imagine it just possible.'

'What! while we were out and had left her! He must be mad!'

'Not necessarily mad, unless to be without principle is to be mad.'

'Mad, or graduating for a Spanish comédie d'intrigue,' said Merthyr. 'What on earth can he mean by it? If he must see her, let him come here. But to dog a carriage at midnight, and to prefer to act startling surprises!—one can't help thinking that he delights in being a stage-hero.'

Georgiana's: 'If he looks on her as a stage-heroine?' was unheeded, and he pursued: 'She must leave England at once,' and stated certain arrangements that were immediately to be made.

'You will not give up this task you have imposed on yourself?' she said.

'To do what?'

She could have answered: 'To make this unsatisfactory creature love you'; but her words were, 'To civilize this little savage.'

Merthyr was bright in a moment: 'I don't give up till I see failure.'

'Is it not possible, dear, to be dangerously blind? urged Georgiana.

'Keep to the particular case,' he returned; 'and don't tempt me into your woman's snare of a generalization. It 's possible, of course, to be one-ideaed and obstinate. But I have not yet seen your savage guilty of a deceit. Her heart has been stirred, and her heart, as you may judge, has force enough to be constant, though none can deny that it has been roughly proved.'

'For which you like her better?' said Georgiana, herself brightening.

'For which I like her better,' he replied, and smiled, perfectly armed.

'Oh! is it because I am a woman that I do not understand this sort of friendship?' cried Georgiana. 'And from you, Merthyr, to a girl such as she is! Me she satisfies less and less. You speak of force of heart, as

if it were manifested in an abandonment of personal will.'

'No, my darling, but in the strong conception of a passion.'

'Yes; if she had discriminated, and fixed upon a worthy object!'

'That,' rejoined Merthyr, 'is akin to the doctrine of justification by success.'

'You seek to foil me with sophisms,' said Georgiana, warming. 'A woman—even a girl—should remember what is due to herself. You are attracted by a passionate nature—I mean, men are.'

'The general instance,' assented Merthyr.

'Then, do you never reflect,' pursued Georgiana, 'on the composition and the elements of that sort of nature? I have tried to think the best of it. It seems to me still—no, not contemptible at all—but selfishness is the groundwork of it; a brilliant selfishness, I admit. I see that it shows its best feature, but is it the nobler for that? I think, and I must think, that excellence is a point to be reached only by unselfishness, and that usefulness is the test of excellence.'

'Before there has been any trial of her?' asked Merthyr. 'Have you not been a little too eager to put the test to her?'

Georgiana reluctantly consented to have her argument attached to a single person. 'She is not a child, Merthyr.'

'Ay; but she should be thought one.'

'I confess I am utterly at sea,' Georgiana sighed. 'Will you at least allow that sordid selfishness does less mischief than this "passion" you admire so much?'

'I will allow that she may do herself more mischief than if she had the opposite vice of avarice—anything you will, of that complexion.'

'And why should she be regarded as a child?' asked Georgiana piteously.

'Because, if she has outnumbered the years of a child, she is no further advanced than a child, owing to what she has to get rid of. She is overburdened with sensations that set her head on fire. Her solid, firm, and gentle heart keeps her balanced, so long as there is no one playing on it. That a fool should be doing so, is scarcely her fault.'

Georgiana murmured to herself, 'He is not a fool.' She said, 'I do see a certain truth in what you say, dear Merthyr. But I have been disappointed in her. I have taken her among my poor. She listens to their tales, without sympathy. I took her into a sick-room. She stood by a dying bed like a statue. Her remark when we came into the air was, "Death seems easy, if it were not so stifling!" Herself always! herself the centre of what she sees and feels! And again, she has no active *desire* to do good to any mortal thing. A passive wish that everybody should be happy, I know she has. Few have not. She would give money if she had it. But this is among the mysteries of Providence to me, that one so indifferent to others should be gifted with so inexplicable a power of attraction.'

Merthyr put this case to her: 'Suppose you saw any of the poor souls you wait on lying sick with fever, would it be just to describe the character of one so situated as fretful, ungrateful, of rambling tongue, poor in health, and generally of loose condition of mind?'

'There, again, is that foreign doctrine which exults in the meanest triumphs by getting the thesis granted that we are animal—only animals!' Georgiana burst out. 'You argue that at this season and at that season she is helpless. If she is a human creature, must she not have a mind to cover those conditions?'

'And a mind,' Merthyr took her up, 'specially experienced, armed, and alert to be a safeguard to her at the most critical period of her life! Oh, yes! Whether she "must" have it is one thing; but no one can contest the value of such a jewel to any young person.'

Georgiana stood silenced; and knew later that she had been silenced by a fallacy. For, is youth the most critical period of life? Neither brother nor sister, however, were talking absolutely for the argument. Beneath this dialogue, the current in her mind pressed to elicit some avowal of his personal feeling for the girl, toward whom Georgiana's disposition was kindlier than her words might lead one to think. He, on the other hand, talked with the distinct object of disguising his feelings under a tone of moderate friendship for Emilia, that was capable of excusing her. A sensitive man of thirty odd years does not loudly proclaim his appreciation of a girl under twenty: moreover, Merthyr wished to spare his sister.

He thought of questioning Robert, the coachman, whether any one had visited the carriage during his five minutes' absence from it: but Merthyr's peculiar Welsh delicacy kept him from doing that, hard as it was to remain in doubt and endure the little poisoned shafts of a suspicion.

In the morning there was a letter from Marini on the breakfast-table. Merthyr glanced down the contents. His countenance flashed with a marvellous light. 'Where is she?' he said, looking keenly for Emilia.

Emilia came in from the garden.

'Now, my Sandra!' cried Merthyr, waving the letter to her; 'can you pack up, to start in an hour? There 's work coming on for us, and I shall be a boy again, and not the drumstick I am in this country. I have a letter from Marini. All Lombardy is prepared to rise, and

this time the business will be done. Marini is off for Genoa. Under the orange-trees, my Sandra ! and looking on the bay, singing of Italy free ! '

Emilia fell back a step, eyeing him with a grave expression of wonder, as if she beheld another being from the one she had hitherto known. The calm Englishman had given place to a volcanic spirit.

' Isn't that the sketch we made ? ' he resumed. ' The plot 's perfect. I detest conspiracies, but we must use what weapons we can, and be Old Mole, if they trample us in the earth. Once up, we have Turin to back us. This I know. We shall have nothing but the Tedeschi to manage : and if they beat us in cavalry, it 's certain that they can't rely on their light horse. The Magyars would break in a charge. We know that they *will*. As for the rest :—

"Soldati settentrionali,
Come sarebbe Boemi e Croati,"

we are a match for them ! Artillery we shall get. The Piedmontese are mad for the signal. Come ; sit and eat. The air seems dead down in this quiet country ; we 're out of the stream. I must rush up to London to breathe, and then we won't lose a moment. We shall be in Italy in four days. Four days, my Sandra ! And Italy going to be free ! Georgey, I 'm fasting. And you will see all your old friends. All ? Good God ! No !—not all ! Their blood shall nerve us. The Austrian thinks he wastes us by slaughter. With every dead man he doubles the life of the living ! Am I talking like a foreigner, Sandra mia ? My child, you don't eat ! And I, who dreamed last night that I looked out over Novara from the height of the Col di Colma, and saw the plain under a red shadow from a huge eagle ! '

Merthyr laughed, swinging round his arm. Emilia

continued staring at him as at a man transformed, while Georgiana asked : ' May Marini's letter be seen ? ' Her visage had become firm and set in proportion as her brother's excitement increased.

' Eat, my Sandra ! eat ! ' called Merthyr, who was himself eating with a campaigning appetite.

Georgiana laid down the letter folded under Merthyr's fingers, keeping her hand on it till he grew alive to her meaning, that it should be put away.

' Marini is vague about artillery,' she murmured.

' Vague ! ' echoed Merthyr. ' Say prudent. If he said we could lay hands on fifty pieces, then distrust him ! '

' God grant that this be not another pit for further fruitless bloodshed ! ' was the interjection standing in Georgiana's eyes, and then she dropped them pensively, while Merthyr recounted the patient schemes that had led to this hour, the unuttered anxieties and the bursting hopes.

Still Emilia kept her distressfully unenthusiastic looks turned from one to the other, though her Italy was the theme. She did not eat, but had dropped one hand flat on her plate, looking almost idiotic. She heard of Italy as of a distant place, known to her in ancient years. Merthyr's transformation, too, helped some form of illusion in her brain that she was cut off from any kindred feeling with other people.

As soon as he had finished, Merthyr jumped up ; and coming round to Emilia, touched her shoulder affectionately, saying : ' Now ! There won't be much packing to do. We shall be in London to-night in time for your mother to pass the evening with you.'

Emilia rose straightway, and her eyes fell vacantly on Georgiana for help, as far as they could express anything.

Georgiana gave no response, save a look well-nigh as vacant in the interchange.

'But you haven't eaten at all!' said Merthyr.

Emilia shook her head. 'No.'

'Eat, my Sandra! to please me! You will need all your strength if you would be a match for Georgey anywhere where there 's action.'

'Yes!' Emilia traversed his words with a sudden outcry. 'Yes, I will go to London. I am ready to go to London now.'

It was clear that a new light had fallen on her intelligence.

Merthyr was satisfied to see her sit down to the table, and he at once went out to issue directions for the first step in the new and momentous expedition.

Emilia put the bread to her mouth, and crumbled it on a dry lip: but it was evident to Georgiana, hostile witness as she was, that Emilia's mind was gradually warming to what Merthyr had said, and that a picture was passing before the girl. She perceived also a thing that no misery of her own had yet drawn from Emilia. It was a tear that fell heavily on the back of her hand. Soon the tears came in quick succession, while the girl tried to eat, and bit at salted morsels. It was a strange sight for Georgiana, this statuesque weeping, that got human bit by bit, till the bosom heaved long sobs: and yet no turn of the head for sympathy; nothing but a passionless shedding of big tear-drops!

She went to the girl, and put her hand upon her; kissed her, and then said: 'We have no time to lose. My brother never delays when he has come to a resolve.'

Emilia tried to articulate: 'I am ready.'

'But you have not eaten!'

Emilia made a mechanical effort to eat.

'Remember,' said Georgiana, 'we have a long distance

to go. You will want your strength. You would not be a burden to him ? Eat, while I get your things ready.' And Georgiana left her, secretly elated to feel that in this expedition it was she, and she alone, who was Merthyr's mate. What storm it was, and what conflict, agitated the girl and stupefied her, she cared not to guess, now that she had the suitable designation, ' savage,' confirmed in all her acts, to apply to her.

When Tracy Runningbrook came down at his ordinary hour of noon to breakfast, he found a twisted note from Georgiana, telling him that important matters had summoned Merthyr to London, and that they were all to be seen at Lady Gosstre's town-house.

' I believe, by Jove ! Powys manœuvres to get her away from *me*,' he shouted, and sat down to his breakfast and his book with a comforted mind. It was not Georgiana to whom he alluded ; but the appearance of Captain Gambier, and the pronounced discomposure visible in the handsome face of the captain on his hearing of the departure, led Tracy to think that Georgiana's was properly deplored by another, though that other was said to be engaged. ' On revient toujours,' he hummed.

CHAPTER XLVIII

CONTAINS A FURTHER VIEW OF SENTIMENT

THREE days passed as a running dream to Emilia. During that period she might have been hurried off to Italy without uttering a remonstrance. Merthyr's spirited talk of the country she called her own ; of its heroic youth banded to rise, and sworn to liberate it or die ; of good historic names borne by men, his comrades, in

old campaigning adventures; and stories and incidents of those past days—all given with his changed face, and changed ringing voice, almost moved her to plunge forgetfully into this new tumultuous stream: while the picture of the beloved land, lying shrouded beneath the perilous star it was about to follow, grew in her mind.

'Shall I go with the Army?' she asked Georgiana.

'No, my child; you will simply go to school,' was the cold reply.

'To school!' Emilia throbbed, 'while they are fighting!'

'To the Academy. My brother's first thought is to further your progress in Art. When your artistic education is complete, you will choose your own course.'

'He knows, he knows that I have no voice!' Emilia struck her lap with twisted fingers. 'My voice is thick in my throat. If I am not to march with him, I can't go; I will not go. I want to see the fight. *You* have. Why should I keep away? Could I run up notes, even if I had any voice, while he is in the cannon-smoke?'

'While he is in the cannon-smoke!' Georgiana revolved the line thoughtfully. 'You are aware that my brother looks forward to the recovery of your voice,' she said.

'My voice is like a dead serpent in my throat,' rejoined Emilia. 'My voice! I have forgotten music. I lived for that, once; now I live for nothing, only to take my chance everywhere with my friend. I want to smell powder. My father says it is like salt, the taste of blood, and is like wine when you smell it. I have heard him shout for it. I will go to Italy, if I may go where my friend Merthyr goes; but nothing can keep me shut up now. My head 's a wilderness when I 'm in houses.

I can scarcely bear to hear this London noise, without going out and walking till I drop.'

Coming to a knot in her meditation, Georgiana concluded that Emilia's heart was warming to Merthyr. She was speedily doubtful again.

These two delicate Welsh natures, as exacting as they were delicate, were little pleased with Emilia's silence concerning her intercourse with Wilfrid. Merthyr, who had expressed in her defence what could be said for her, was unwittingly cherishing what could be thought in her disfavour. Neither of them hit on the true cause, which lay in Georgiana's coldness to her. One little pressure of her hand, carelessly given, made Merthyr better aware of the nature he was dealing with. He was telling her that a further delay might keep them in London for a week ; and that he had sent for her mother to come to her.

'I must see my mother,' she had said, excitedly. The extension of the period named for quitting England made it more imminent in her imagination than when it was a matter of hours. 'I must see her.'

'I have sent for her,' said Merthyr, and then pressed Emilia's hand. But she who, without having brooded on complaints of its absence, thirsted for demonstrative kindness, clung to the hand, drawing it, doubled, against her chin.

'That is not the reason,' she said, raising her full eyes up at him over the unrelinquished hand. 'I love the poor Madre ; let her come ; but I have no heart for her just now. I have seen Wilfrid.'

She took a tighter hold of his fingers, as fearing he might shrink from her. Merthyr hated mysteries, so he said, 'I supposed it must have been so—that night of our return from Penarvon ? '

'Yes,' she murmured, while she read his face for a

shadow of a repulsion ; ' and, my friend, I cannot go to Italy now ! '

Merthyr immediately drew a seat beside her. He perceived that there would be no access to her reason, even as he was on the point of addressing it.

' Then all my care and trouble are to be thrown away ? ' he said, taking the short road to her feelings.

She put the hand that was disengaged softly on his shoulder. ' No ; not thrown away. Let me be what Merthyr wishes me to be ! That is my chief prayer.'

' Why, then, will you not do what Merthyr wishes you to do ? '

Emilia's eyelids shut, while her face still fronted him.

' Oh ! I will speak all out to you,' she cried. ' Merthyr, my friend, he came to kiss me once, before——. I have only just understood it ! He is going to Austria. He came to touch me for the last time before his hand is red with my blood. Stop him from going ! I am ready to follow you :—I can hear of his marrying that woman : —Oh ! I cannot live and think of him in that Austrian white coat. Poor thing !—my dear ! my dear ! ' And she turned away her head.

It is not unnatural that Merthyr hearing these soft epithets, should disbelieve in the implied self-conquest of her preceding words. He had no clue to make him guess that these were simply old exclamations of hers brought to her lips by the sorrowful contrast in her mind.

' It will be better that you should see him,' he said, with less of his natural sincerity ; so soon are we corrupted by any suspicion that our egoism prompts.

' Here ? ' And she hung close to him, open-lipped, open-eyed, open-eared, as if (Georgiana would think it, thought Merthyr) her savage senses had laid the trap for this proposal, and now sprung up keen for their prey.

'Here, Merthyr? Yes! let me see him. You will! Let me see him, for he cannot resist me. He tries. He thinks he does: but he cannot. I can stretch out my finger—I can put it on the day when, if he has galloped one way he will gallop another. Let him come.'

She held up both her hands in petition, half dropping her eyelids, with a shadowy beauty.

In Merthyr's present view, the idea of Wilfrid being in ranks opposed to him was so little provocative of intense dissatisfaction, that it was out of his power to believe that Emilia craved to see him simply to dissuade the man from the obnoxious step.

'Ah, well! See him; see him, if you must,' he said. 'Arrange it with my sister.'

He quitted the room, shrinking from the sound of her thanks, and still more from the consciousness of his torment.

The business that detained him was to get money for Marini. Georgiana placed her fortune at his disposal a second time. There was his own, which he deemed it no excess of chivalry to fling into the gulf. The two sat together, arrangeing what property should be sold, and how they would share the sacrifice in common. Georgiana pressed him to dispose of a little estate belonging to her, that money might immediately be raised. They talked as they sat over the fire toward the dusk of the winter evening.

'You would not have refused me once, Merthyr!'

'When you were a child, and I hardly better than a boy. Now it 's different. Let mine go first, Georgey. You may have a husband, who will not look on these things as we do.'

'How can I love a husband!' was all she said; and Merthyr took her in his arms. His gaiety had gone.

'We can't go dancing into a pit of this sort,' he sighed,

partly to baffle the scrutiny he apprehended in her silence. 'The garrison at Milan is doubled, and I hear they are marching troops through Tyrol. Some alerte has been given, and probably some traitors exist. One wouldn't like to be shot like a dog! You haven't forgotten poor Tarani? I heard yesterday of the girl who calls herself his widow.'

'They were betrothed, and she is!' exclaimed Georgiana.

'Well, there 's a case of a man who had two loves—a woman and his country; and both true to him!'

'And is he so singular, Merthyr?'

'No, my best! my sweetest! my heart's rest! no!'

They exchanged tender smiles.

'Tarani's bride—beloved! you can listen to such matters—she has undertaken her task. Who imposed it? I confess I faint at the thought of things so sad and shameful. But I dare not sit in judgement on a people suffering as they are. Outrage upon outrage they have endured, and that deadens—or rather makes their heroism unscrupulous. Tarani's bride is one of the few fair girls of Italy. We have a lock of her hair. She shore it close the morning her lover was shot, and wore the thin white skull-cap you remember, until it was whispered to her that her beauty must serve.'

'I have the lock now in my desk,' said Georgiana, beginning to tremble. 'Do you wish to look at it?'

'Yes; fetch it, my darling.'

He sat eyeing the firelight till she returned, and then taking the long golden lock in his hand, he squeezed it, full of bitter memories and sorrowfulness.

'Giulietta?' breathed his sister.

'I would put my life on the truth of that woman's love. Well!——'

'Yes?'

'She abandons herself to the commandant of the citadel.'

A low outcry burst from Georgiana. She fell at Merthyr's knees sobbing violently. He let her sob. In the end she struggled to speak.

'Oh! can it be permitted? Oh! can we not save her? Oh, poor soul! my sister! Is she blind to her lover in heaven?'

Georgiana's face was dyed with shame.

'We must put these things by,' said Merthyr. 'Go to Emilia presently, and tell her—settle with her as you think fitting, how she shall see this Wilfrid Pole. I have promised her she shall have her wish.'

Coloured by the emotion she was burning from, these words smote Georgiana with a mournful compassion for Merthyr.

He had risen, and by that she knew that nothing could be said to alter his will.

A sentimental pair likewise, if you please; but these were sentimentalists who served an active deity, and not that arbitrary projection of a subtle selfishness which rules the fairer portion of our fat England.

CHAPTER XLIX

BETWEEN EMILIA AND GEORGIANA

'My brother tells me it is your wish to see Mr. Wilfrid Pole.'

Emilia's 'Yes' came faintly in answer to Georgiana's cold accents.

'Have you considered what you are doing in expressing such a desire?'

Another 'Yes' was heard from under an unlifted head:—a culprit affirmative, whereat the just take fire.

'Be honest, Emilia. Seek counsel and guidance to-night, as you have done before with me, and profited, I think. If I write to bid him come, what will it mean?'

'Nothing more,' breathed Emilia.

'To him—for in his way he seems to care for you fitfully—it will mean—stop! hear me. The words you speak will have no part of the meaning, even if you restrain your tongue. To him it will imply that his power over you is unaltered. I suppose that the task of making you perceive the effect it really will have on you is hopeless.'

'I have seen him, and I know,' said Emilia, in a corresponding tone.

'You saw him that night of our return from Penarvon? Judge of him by that. He would not spare you. To gratify I know not what wildness in his nature, he did not hesitate to open your old wound. And to what purpose? A freak of passion!'

'He could not help it. I told him he would come, and he came.'

'This, possibly, you call love; do you not?'

Emilia was about to utter a plain affirmative, but it was checked. The novelty of the idea of its not being love arrested her imagination.

'If he comes to you here,' resumed Georgiana—

'He must come!' cried Emilia.

'My brother has sanctioned it, so his coming or not will rest with him. If he comes, let me know the good that you think will result from an interview? Ah! you have not weighed that question. Do so;—or you give no heed to it? In any case, try to look into your own breast. You were not born to live unworthily. You

can be, or will be, if you follow your better star, self-denying and noble. Do you not love your country. Judge of this love by that. Your love, if you have this power over him, is merely a madness to him ; and his—what has it done for you ? If he comes, and this begins again, there will be a similar if not the same destiny for you.'

Emilia panted in her reply. 'No ; it will not begin again.' She threw out both arms, shaking her head. 'It cannot, I know. What am I now ? It is what I was that he loves. He will not know what I am till he sees me. And I know that I have done things that he cannot forgive. You have forgiven it, and Merthyr, because he is my friend ; but I am sure Wilfrid will not. He might pardon the poor "me," but not his Emilia ! I shall have to tell him what I did ; so ' (and she came closer to Georgiana) 'there is some pain for me in seeing him.'

Georgiana was not proof against this simplicity of speech, backed by a little dying dimple, which seemed a continuation of the plain sadness of Emilia's tone.

She said, 'My poor child ! ' almost fondly, and then Emilia looked in her face, murmuring, 'You sometimes doubt me.'

'Not your truth, but the accuracy of your perceptions and your knowledge of your real designs. You are certainly deceiving yourself at this instant. In the first place, the relation of that madness—no, poor child, not wickedness—but if you tell it to him, it is a wilful and unnecessary self-abasement. If he is to be your husband, unburden your heart at once. Otherwise, why ? why ? You are but working up a scene, provoking needless excesses : you are storing misery in retrospect, or wretchedness to be endured. Had you the habit of prayer ! By degrees it will give you the thirst for purity,

and that makes you a fountain of prayer, in whom these blind deceits cannot hide.'

Georgiana paused emphatically; as when, by our unrolling out of our ideas, we have more thoroughly convinced ourselves.

'You pray to heaven,' said Emilia, and then faltered, and blushed. 'I must be loved!' she cried. 'Will you not put your arms round me?'

Georgiana drew her to her bosom, bidding her continue. Emilia lay whispering under her chin. 'You pray, and you wish to be seen as you are, do you not? You do. Well, if you knew what love is, you would see it is the same. You wish him to see and know *you*: you wish to be sure that he loves nothing but exactly you; it must be yourself. You are jealous of his loving an idea of you that is not you. You think, "He will wake up and find his mistake"; or you think, "That kiss was not intended for me"; not "for me as I am." Those are tortures!'

Her discipline had transformed her, when she could utter such sentiments as these!

Feeling her shudder, and not knowing how imagination forestalls experience in passionate blood, Georgiana said, 'You speak like one who has undergone them. But now at least you have thrown off the mask. You love him still, this man! And with as little strength of will! Do you not see impiety in the comparison you have made?'

'Oh! what I see is, that I wish I could say to him, "Look on me, for I need not be ashamed—I am like Miss Ford!"'

The young lady's cheeks took fire, and the clear path of speech becoming confused in her head, she said, '*Miss Ford?*'

'Georgiana,' said Emilia, and feeling that her friend's

cold manner had melted; 'Georgey! my beloved! my darling in Italy, where will we go! I envy no woman but you who have seen my dear ones fight. You and I, and Merthyr! Nothing but Austrian shot shall part us.'

'And so we make up a pretty dream!' interjected Georgiana. 'The Austrian shot, I think, will be fired by one who is now in the Austrian service, or who soon will be.'

'Wilfrid?' Emilia called out. 'No; that is what I am going to stop. Why did I not tell you so at first? But I never know what I say or do when I am with you, and everything seems chance. I want to see him to prevent him from doing that. I can.'

'Why should you?' asked Georgiana; and one to whom the faces of the two had been displayed at that moment would have pronounced them a hostile couple.

'Why should I prevent him?' Emilia doled out the question slowly, and gave herself no further thought of replying to it.

Apparently Georgiana understood the significance of this odd silence: she was perhaps touched by it. She said, 'You feel that you have a power over him. You wish to exercise it. Never mind wherefore. If you do —if you try, and succeed—if, by the aid of this love presupposed to exist, you win him to what you require of him—do you honestly think the love is then immediately to be dropped?'

Emilia meditated. She caught up her voice hastily. 'I think so. Yes. I hope so. I mean it to be.'

'With a noble lover, Emilia. Not with a selfish one. In showing him the belief you have in your power over him, you betray that he has power over you. And it is to no object. His family, his position, his prospects—all tell you that he cannot marry you if he would. And he is, besides, engaged——'

'Let her suffer!' Emilia's eyes flashed.

'Ah!' and Georgiana thought, 'Have I come upon your nature at last?'

However it might be, Emilia was determined to show it.

'She took my lover from me, and I say, let her suffer! I would not hurt her myself—I would not lay my finger on her: but she has eyes like blue stones, and such a mouth!—I think the Austrian executioner has one like it. If she suffers, and goes all dark as I did, she will show a better face. Let her keep my lover. He is not mine, but he was; and she took him from me. That woman cannot feed on him as I did. I know she has no hunger for love. He will look at those blue bits of ice, and think of me. I told him so. Did I not tell him that in Devon? I saw her eyelids move fast as I spoke. I think I look on Winter when I see her lips. Poor, wretched Wilfrid!'

Emilia half-sobbed this exclamation out. 'I don't wish to hurt either of them,' she added, with a smile of such abrupt opposition to her words that Georgiana was in perplexity. A lady who has assumed the office of lecturer, will, in such a frame of mind, lecture on, if merely to vindicate to herself her own preconceptions. Georgiana laid her finger severely upon Wilfrid's manifest faults; and, in fine, she spoke a great deal of the common sense that the situation demanded. Nevertheless, Emilia held to her scheme. But, in the meantime, Georgiana had seen more clearly into the girl's heart; and she had been won, also, by a natural gracefulness that she now perceived in her, and which led her to think, 'Is Merthyr again to show me that he never errs in his judgement?' An unaccountable movement of tenderness to Emilia made her drop a few kisses on her forehead. Emilia shut her eyes, waiting for more. Then she looked

up, and said, 'Have you felt this love for me very long?' at which the puny flame, scarce visible, sprang up, and warmed to a great heat.

'My own Emilia! Sandra! listen to me: promise me not to seek this interview.'

'Will you always love me as much?' Emilia bargained.

'Yes, yes; I never vary. It is my love for you that begs you.'

Emilia fell into a chair and propped her head behind both hands, tapping the floor briskly with her feet. Georgiana watched the conflict going on. To decide it promptly, she said: 'And not only shall I love you thrice as well, but my brother Merthyr, whom you call your friend—he will—he cannot love you better; but he will feel you to be worthy the best love he can give. There is a heart, you simple girl! He loves you, and has never shown any of the pain your conduct has given him. When I say he loves you, I tell you his one weakness—the only one I have discovered. And judge whether he has shown want of self-control while you were dying for another. Did he attempt to thwart you? No; to strengthen you; and never once to turn your attention to himself. That is love. Now, think of what anguish you have made him pass through: and think whether you have ever witnessed an alteration of kindness in his face toward you. Even now, when he had the hope that you were cured of your foolish fruitless affection for a man who merely played with you, and cannot give up the habit, even now he hides what he feels——'

So far Emilia let her speak without interruption; but gradually awakening to the meaning of the words:

'For me?' she cried.

'Yes; for you.'

'The same sort of love as Wilfrid feels?'

'By no means the same sort; but the love of man for woman.'

'And he saw me when I was that wretched heap? And he knows everything! and loves me. He has never kissed me.'

'Does that miserable test——?' Georgiana was asking.

'Pardon, pardon,' said Emilia penitently; 'I know that is almost nothing, now. I am not a child. I spoke from a sudden feeling. For if he loves me, how——! Oh, Merthyr! what a little creature I seem. I cannot understand it. I lose a brother. And he was such a *certainty* to me. What did he love—what did he love, that night he found me on the pier? I looked like a creature picked off a mud-bank. I felt like a worm, and miserably abandoned, I was a shameful sight. Oh! how can I look on Merthyr's face again?'

In these interjections Georgiana did not observe the proper humility and abject gratitude of a young person who had heard that she was selected by a prince of the earth. A sort of 'Eastern handmaid' prostration, with joined hands, and, above all things, a closed mouth, the lady desired. She half regretted the revelation she had made; and to be sure at once that she had reaped some practical good, she said: 'I need scarce ask you whether you have come to a right decision upon that other question.'

'To see Wilfrid?' said Emilia. She appeared to pause musingly, and then turned to Georgiana, showing happy features; 'Yes: I shall see him. I must see him. Let him know he is to come immediately.'

'*That* is your decision.'

'Yes.'

'After what I have told you?'

'Oh, yes; yes! Write the letter.'

Georgiana chid at an internal wrath that struggled to win her lips. 'Promise me simply that what I have told you of my brother, you will consider yourself bound to keep secret. You will not speak of it to others, nor to him.'

Emilia gave the promise, but with the thought; 'To him ?—will not he speak of it ? '

'So, then, I am to write this letter ? ' said Georgiana.

'Do, do; at once ! ' Emilia put on her sweetest look to plead for it.

'Decidedly the wisest of men are fools in this matter,' Georgiana's reflection swam upon her anger.

'And dearest ! my Georgey ! ' Emilia insisted on being blunt to the outward indications to which she was commonly so sensitive and reflective; 'my Georgey ! let me be alone this evening in my bed-room. The little Madre comes, and—and I haven't the habit of being respectful to her. And, I must be alone ! Do not send up for me, whoever wishes it.'

Georgiana could not stop her tongue: 'Not if Mr. Wilfrid Pole——? '

'Oh, he ! I will see *him*,' said Emilia; and Georgiana went from her straightway.

CHAPTER L

EMILIA BEGINS TO FEEL MERTHYR'S POWER

Emilia remained locked up with her mother all that evening. The good little shrill woman, tender-eyed and slatternly, had to help try on dresses, and run about for pins, and express her critical taste in undertones, believing all the while that her daughter had given up music

to go mad with vanity. The reflection struck her, notwithstanding, that it was a wiser thing for one of her sex to make friends among rich people than to marry a foreign husband. The girl looked a brilliant woman in a superb Venetian dress of purple velvet, which she called 'the Branciani dress,' and once attired in it, and the rich purfles and swelling creases over the shoulders puffed out to her satisfaction, and the run of yellow braid about it properly inspected and flattened, she would not return to her more homely wear, though very soon her mother began to whimper and say that she had lost her so long, and now that she had found her it hardly seemed the same child. Emilia would listen to no entreaties to put away her sumptuous robe. She silenced her mother with a stamp of her foot, and then sighed: 'Ah! Why do I always feel such a tyrant with you?' kissing her.

'This dress,' she said, and held up her mother's chin fondlingly between her two hands, 'this dress was designed by my friend Merthyr—that is, Mr. Powys—from what he remembered of a dress worn by Countess Branciani, of Venice. He had it made to give to me. It came from Paris. Countess Branciani was one of his dearest friends. I feel that I am twice as much his friend with this on me. Mother, it seems like a deep blush all over me. I feel as if I looked out of a rose.'

She spread her hands to express the flower magnified.

'Oh! what silly talk,' said her mother: 'it *does* turn your head, this dress does!'

'I wish it would give me my voice, mother. My father has no hope. I wish he would send me news to make me happy about him; or come and run his finger up the strings for hours, as he used to. I have fancied I heard him at times, and I had a longing to follow the notes, and felt sure of my semi-tones. He won't see me! Mother! he would think something of me if he saw me now!'

Her mother's lamentations reached that vocal pitch at last which Emilia could not endure, and the little lady was despatched to her home under charge of a servant.

Emilia feasted on the looking-glass when alone. Had Merthyr, in restoring her to health, given her an overdose of the poison ?

'Countess Branciani made the Austrian Governor her slave,' she uttered, planting one foot upon a stool to lend herself height. 'He told her who were suspected, and who would be imprisoned, and gave her all the State secrets. Beauty can do more than music. I wonder whether Merthyr loved her ? He loves me ! '

Emilia was smitten with a fear that he would speak of it when she next saw him. 'Oh ! I hope he will be just the same as he has been,' she sighed ; and with much melancholy shook her head at her fair reflection, and began to undress. It had not struck her with surprise that two men should be loving her, until, standing away from the purple folds, she seemed to grow smaller and smaller, as a fire-log robbed of its flame, and felt insufficient and weak. This was a new sensation. She depended no more on her own vital sincerity. It was in her nature, doubtless, to crave constantly for approval, but in the service of personal beauty instead of divine Art, she found herself utterly unwound without it : victim of a sense of most uncomfortable hollowness. She was glad to extinguish the candle and be covered up dark in the circle of her warmth. Then her young blood sang to her again.

An hour before breakfast every morning she read with Merthyr. Now, this morning how was she to appear to him ? There would be no reading, of course. How could he think of teaching one to whom he trembled ? Emilia trusted that she might see no change in him, and, above all, that he would not speak of his love for

her. Nevertheless, she put on her robe of conquest, having first rejected with distaste a plainer garb. She went down the stairs slowly. Merthyr was in the library awaiting her. 'You are late,' he said, eyeing the dress as a thing apart from her, and remarking that it was hardly suited for morning wear. 'Yellow, if you must have a strong colour, and you wouldn't exhibit the schwartz-gelb of the Tedeschi willingly. But now!'

This was the signal for the reading to commence.

'Wilfrid would not have been so cold to me,' thought Emilia, turning the leaves of Ariosto as a book of ashes. Not a word of love appeared to be in his mind. This she did not regret; but she thirsted for the assuring look. His eyes were quietly friendly. So friendly was he, that he blamed her for inattention, and took her once to task about a melodious accent in which she vulgarized the vowels. All the flattery of the Branciani dress could not keep Emilia from her feeling of smallness. Was it possible that he loved her? She watched him as eagerly as her shyness would permit. Any shadow of a change was spied for. Getting no softness from him, or superadded kindness, no shadow of a change in that direction, she stumbled in her reading purposely, to draw down rebuke; her construing was villanously bad. He told her so, and she replied: 'I don't like poetry.' But seeing him exchange Ariosto for Roman History, she murmured, 'I like Dante.' Merthyr plunged her remorselessly into the second Punic war.

But there was worse to follow. She was informed that after breakfast she would be called upon to repeat the principal facts she had been reading of. Emilia groaned audibly.

'Take the book,' said Merthyr.

'It 's so heavy,' she complained.

'Heavy?'

'I mean, to carry about.'

'If you want to "carry it about," the boy shall follow you with it.'

She understood that she was being laughed at. Languor, coupled with the consciousness of ridicule, overwhelmed her.

'I feel I *can't* learn,' she said.

'Feel, that you must,' was replied to her.

'No; don't take any more trouble with me!'

'Yes; I expect you to distinguish Scipio from Cicero, and not make the mistake of the other evening, when you were talking to Mrs. Cameron.'

Emilia left him, abashed, to dread shrewdly their meeting within five minutes at the breakfast-table; to dread eating under his eyes, with doubts of the character of her acts generally. She was, indeed, his humble scholar, though she seemed so full of weariness and revolt. He, however, when alone, looked fixedly at the door through which she had passed, and said, 'She loves that man still. Similar ages, similar tastes, I suppose! She is dressed to be ready for him. She can't learn: she can do nothing. My work mayn't be lost, but it 's lost for me.'

Merthyr did not know that Georgiana had betrayed him, but in no case would he have given Emilia the signs she expected: in the first place, because he had self-command; and, secondly, because of those years he counted in advance of her. So she had the full mystery of his loving her to think over, without a spot of the weakness to fasten on.

Georgiana's first sight of Emilia in her Branciani dress shut her heart against the girl with iron clasps. She took occasion to remark, 'We need not expect visitors so very early'; but the offender was impervious. Breakfast finished, the reading with Merthyr recommenced, when

Emilia, having got over her surprise at the sameness of things this day, acquitted herself better, and even declaimed the verses musically. Seeing him look pleased, she spoke them out sonorously. Merthyr applauded. Upon which Emilia said, with odd abruptness and solemnity, 'Will he come to-day?' It was beyond Merthyr's power of self-control to consent to be taken into a consultation on this matter, and he attempted to put it aside. 'He may or he may not—probably to-morrow.'

'No; to-day, in the afternoon,' said Emilia, 'be near me.'

'I have engagements.'

'Some word, say, that will seem to be you with me.'

'Some flattery, or you won't remember it.'

'Yes, I like flattery.'

'Well, you look like Countess Branciani when, after thinking her husband the basest of men, she discovered him to be the noblest.'

Emilia blushed. 'That 's not easily forgotten! But she must have looked braver, bolder, not so under a burden as I feel.'

'The comparison was meant to suit the moment of your reciting.'

'Yes,' said Emilia, half-mournfully, 'then "myself" doesn't sit on my shoulders: I don't even care what I am.'

'That is what Art does for you.'

'Only by fits and starts now. Once I never thought of myself.'

There was a knock at the street-door, and she changed countenance. Presently there came a gentle tap at their own door.

'It is that woman,' said Emilia.

'I fancy it must be Lady Charlotte. You will not see her?'

Merthyr was anticipating a negative, but Emilia said, 'Let her come in.'

She gave her hand to the lady, and was the less concerned of the two. Lady Charlotte turned away from her briskly.

'Georgey didn't say anything of you in her letter, Merthyr; I am going up to her, but I wished to satisfy myself that you were in town, first:—to save half-a-minute, you see! I anticipate the philosophic manly sneer. Is it really true that you are going to mix yourself up in this mad Italian business again? Now that you 're a man, my dear Merthyr, it seems almost inexcusable—for a sensible Englishman!'

Lady Charlotte laughed, giving him her hand at the same time.

'Don't you know I swore an oath?' Merthyr caught up her tone.

'Yes, but you never succeed. I complain that you never succeed. Of what use on earth are all your efforts if you never succeed?'

Emilia's voice burst out:

> '"Piacemi almen che i miei sospir sien quali
> Spera 'l Tevero e l' Arno,
> E 'l Po,——"'

Merthyr continued the ode, acting a similar fervour:

> '"Ben provvide Natura al nostro stato
> Quando dell' Alpi schermo
> Pose fra noi e la tedesca rabbia."

'We are merely bondsmen to the re-establishment of the provisions of nature.'

'And we know we *shall* succeed!' said Emilia, per-

mitting her antagonism to pass forth in irritable emphasis.

Lady Charlotte quickly left them, to run up to Georgiana. She was not long in the house. Emilia hung near Merthyr all day, and she was near him when the knock was heard which she could suppose to be Wilfrid's, as it proved. Wilfrid was ushered in to Georgiana. Delicacy had prevented Merthyr from taking special notice to Emilia of Lady Charlotte's visit, and he treated Wilfrid's similarly, saying, 'Georgey will send down word.'

'Only, don't leave me till she does,' Emilia rejoined.

Her agitation laid her open to be misinterpreted. It was increased when she saw him take a book and sit in the armchair between two lighted candles, calmly careless of her. She did not actually define to herself that he should feel jealously, but his indifference was one extreme which provoked her instinct to imagine a necessity for the other. Word came from Georgiana, and Emilia moved to the door. 'Remember, we dine half-an-hour earlier to-day, on account of the Cameron party,' was all that he uttered. Emilia made an effort to go. She felt herself as a ship sailing into perilous waters, without compass. Why did he not speak tenderly? Before Georgiana had revealed his love for her, she had been strong to see Wilfrid. Now, the idea smote her softened heart that Wilfrid's passion might engulf her if she had no word of sustainment from Merthyr. She turned and flung herself at his feet, murmuring, 'Say something to me.' Merthyr divined this emotion to be a sort of foresight of remorse on her part: he clasped the interwoven fingers of her hands, letting his eyes dwell upon hers. The marvel of their not wavering or softening meaningly kept her speechless,

She rose with a strength not her own : not comforted, and no longer speculating. It was as if she had been eyeing a golden door shut fast, that might some day open, but was in itself precious to behold. She arose with deep humbleness, which awakened new ideas of the nature of worth in her bosom. She felt herself so low before this man who would not be played upon as an obsequious instrument—who would not leap into ardour for her beauty ! Before that man up-stairs how would she feel ? The question did not come to her. She entered the room where he was, without a blush. Her step was firm, and her face expressed a quiet gladness. Georgiana stayed through the first commonplaces : then they were alone.

CHAPTER LI

A CHAPTER INTERRUPTED BY THE PHILOSOPHER

Commonplaces continued to be Wilfrid's refuge, for sentiment was surging mightily within him. The commonplaces concerning father, sisters, health, weather, sickened him when uttered, so much that for a time he was unobservant of Emilia's ready exchange of them. To a compliment on her appearance, she said : ' You like this dress ? I will tell you the history of it. I call it the Branciani dress. Mr. Powys designed it for me. The Countess Branciani was his friend. She used always to dress in this colour ; just in this style. She also was dark. And she imagined that her husband favoured the Austrians. She believed he was an Austrian spy. It was impossible for her not to hate him——'

' Her husband ! ' quoth Wilfrid. The unexpected

richness that had come upon her beauty and the coolness of her prattle at such an interview amazed and mortified him.

'She supposed him to be an Austrian spy!'

'Still he was her husband!'

Emilia gave her features a moment's play, but she had not full command of them, and the spark of scorn they emitted was very slight.

'Ah!' his tone had fallen into a depth, 'how I thank you for the honour you have done me in desiring to see me once before you leave England! I know that I have not merited it.'

More he said on this theme, blaming himself emphatically, until startled by the commonplaces he was uttering he stopped short; and the stopping was effective, if the speech was not. Where was the tongue of his passion? He almost asked it of himself. Where was Hippogriff? He who had burned to see her, he saw her now, fair as a vision, and yet in the flesh! Why was he as good as tongue-tied in her presence when he had such fires to pour forth?

(Presuming that he has not previously explained it, the Philosopher here observes that Hippogriff, the foal of Fiery Circumstance out of Sentiment, must be subject to strong sentimental friction before he is capable of a flight: his appetites must fast long in the very eye of provocation ere he shall be eloquent. Let him, the Philosopher, repeat at the same time that souls harmonious to Nature, of whom there are few, do not mount this animal. Those who have true passion are not at the mercy of Hippogriff—otherwise *Sur-excited Sentiment*. You will mark in them constantly a reverence for the laws of their being, and a natural obedience to common sense. They are subject to storm, as in everything

earthly, and they need no lesson of devotion ; but they never move to an object in a madness.)

——Now this is good teaching : it is indeed my Philosopher's object—his *purpose*—to work out this distinction ; and all I wish is that it were good for my market. What the Philosopher means, is to plant in the reader's path a staring contrast between my pet Emilia and his puppet Wilfrid. It would be very commendable and serviceable if a novel were what he thinks it : but all attestation favours the critical dictum, that a novel is to give us copious sugar and no cane. I, myself, as a reader, consider concomitant cane an adulteration of the qualities of sugar. My Philosopher's error is to deem the sugar, born of the cane, inseparable from it. The which is naturally resented, and away flies my book back at the heads of the librarians, hitting me behind them a far more grievous blow.

Such is the construction of my story, however, that to entirely deny the Philosopher the privilege he stipulated for when with his assistance I conceived it, would render our performance unintelligible to that acute and honourable minority which consents to be thwacked with aphorisms and sentences and a fantastic delivery of the verities. While my Play goes on, I must permit him to come forward occasionally. We are indeed in a sort of partnership, and it is useless for me to tell him that he is not popular and destroys my chance.

CHAPTER LII

A FRESH DUET BETWEEN WILFRID AND EMILIA

'Don't blame yourself, my Wilfrid.'

Emilia spoke thus, full of pity for him, and in her adorable, deep-fluted tones, after the effective stop he had come to.

The 'my Wilfrid' made the owner of the name quiver with satisfaction. He breathed: 'You have forgiven me?'

'That I have. And there was indeed no blame. My voice has gone. Yes, but I do not think it your fault.'

'It was! it is!' groaned Wilfrid. 'But, has your voice gone?' He leaned nearer to her, drawing largely on the claim his incredulity had to inspect her sweet features accurately. 'You speak just as—more deliciously than ever! I can't think you have lost it. Ah! forgive me! forgive me!'

Emilia was about to put her hand over to him, but the prompt impulse was checked by a simultaneous feminine warning within. She smiled, saying: '"I forgive" seems such a strange thing for me to say'; and to convey any further meaning that might comfort him, better than words could do, she held on her smile. The smile was of the acceptedly feigned, conventional character; a polished surface: belonging to the passage of the discourse, and not to the emotions. Wilfrid's swelling passion slipped on it. Sensitively he discerned an ease in its formation and disappearance that shot a first doubt through him, whether he really maintained his empire in her heart. If he did not reign there, why had she sent for him? He attributed the unheated smile

to a defect in her manner, that was always chargeable with something, as he remembered. He began systematically to account for his acts : but the man was so constituted that as he laid them out for pardon, he himself condemned them most ; and looking back at his weakness and double play, he broke through his phrases to cry without premeditation : ' Can you have loved me then ? '

Emilia's cheeks tingled : ' Don't speak of that night in Devon,' she replied.

' Ah ! ' sighed he. ' I did not mean then. *Then* you must have hated me.'

' No ; for, what did I say ? I said that you would come to me—nothing more. I hated that woman. You ? Oh, no ! '

' You loved me, then ? '

' Did I not offer to work for you, if you were poor ? And—I can't remember what I said. Please, do not speak of that night.'

' Emilia ! as a man of honour, I was bound——'

She lifted her hands : ' Oh ! be silent, and let that night die.'

' I may speak of that night when you drove home from Penarvon Castle, and a robber——? You have forgotten him, perhaps ! What did he steal ? not what he came for, but something dearer to him than anything he possesses. How can I say——? Dear to me ? If it were dipped in my heart's blood !——'

Emilia was far from being carried away by the recollection of the scene ; but remembering what her emotion had then been, she wondered at her coolness now.

' I may speak of Wilming Weir ? ' he insinuated.

Her bosom rose softly and heavily. As if throwing off some cloak of enchantment that clogged her spirit ! ' I was telling you of this dress,' she said : ' I mean, of Countess Branciani. She thought her husband was the

Austrian spy who had betrayed them, and she said, "he is not worthy to live." Everybody knew that she had loved him. I have seen his portrait and hers. I never saw faces that looked so fond of life. She had that Italian beauty which is to any other like the difference between velvet and silk.'

'Oh! do I require to be told the difference?' Wilfrid's heart throbbed.

'She,' pursued Emilia, 'she loved him still, I believe, but her country was her religion. There was known to be a great conspiracy, and no one knew the leader of it. All true Italians trusted Countess Branciani, though she visited the Austrian Governor's house—a General with some name on the teeth. One night she said to him, "You have a spy who betrays you." The General never suspected Countess Branciani. Women are devils of cleverness sometimes. But he did suspect it must be her husband—thinking, I suppose, "How otherwise would she have known he was my spy?" He gave Count Branciani secret work and high pay. Then he set a watch on him. Count Branciani was to find out who was this unknown leader. He said to the Austrian Governor, "You shall know him in ten days." This was repeated to Countess Branciani, and she said to herself, "My husband! you shall perish, though I should have to stab you myself." '

Emilia's sympathetic hand twitched. Wilfrid seized it, but it proved no soft melting prize. She begged to be allowed to continue. He entreated her to. Thereat she pulled gently for her hand, and persisting, it was grudgingly let go.

'One night Countess Branciani put the Austrians on her husband's track. He knew that she was true to her country, and had no fear of her, whether she touched the Black-yellow gold or not. But he did not confide any

of his projects to her. And his reason was, that as she went to the Governor's, she might accidentally, by a word or a sign, show that she was an accomplice in the conspiracy. He wished to save her from a suspicion. Brave Branciani ! '

Emilia had a little shudder of excitement.

' Only,' she added, ' why will men always think women are so weak ? The Count worked with conspirators who were not dreaming they would do anything, but were plotting to do it. The Countess belonged to the other party—men who never thought they were strong enough to see their ideas acting—I mean, not bold enough to take their chance. As if we die more than one death, and the blood we spill for Italy is ever wasted ! That night the Austrian spy followed the Count to the meeting-house of the conspirators. It was thought quite natural that the Count should go there. But the spy, not having the password, crouched outside, and heard from two that came out muttering, the next appointment for a meeting. This was told to Countess Branciani, and in the meantime she heard from the Austrian Governor that her husband had given in names of the conspirators. She determined at once. Now may Christ and the Virgin help me ! '

Emilia struck her knees, while tears started through her shut eyelids. The exclamation must have been caught from her father, who liked not the priests of his native land well enough to interfere between his English wife and their child in such a matter as religious training.

' What happened ? ' said Wilfrid, vainly seeking for a personal application in this narrative.

' Listen !—Ah ! ' she fought with her tears, and said, as they rolled down her face : ' For a miserable thing one cannot help, I find I must cry. This is what she did. She told him she knew of the conspiracy, and asked

permission to join it, swearing that she was true to Italy. He said he believed her.—Oh, heaven !—And for some time she had to beg and beg ; but to spare her he would not let her join. I cannot tell why—he gave her the password for the next meeting, and said that an old gold coin must be shown. She must have coaxed it, though he was a strong man who could resist women. I suppose he felt that he had been unkind.—Were I Queen of Italy he should stand for ever in a statue of gold !—The next appointed night a spy entered among the conspirators, with the password and the coin. Did I tell you the Countess had one child—a girl ! She lives now, and I am to know her. She is like her mother. That little girl was playing down the stairs with her nurse when a band of Austrian soldiers entered the hall underneath, and an officer, with his sword drawn, and some men, came marching up in their stiff way—the machines ! This officer stooped to her, and before the nurse could stop her, made her say where her father was. Those Austrians make children betray their parents ! They don't think how we grow up to detest them. Do I ? Hate is not the word : it burns so hot and steady with me. The Countess came out on the first landing ; she saw what was happening. When her husband was led out, she asked permission to embrace him. The officer consented, but she had to say to him, "Move back," and then, with her lips to her husband's cheek, "Betray no more of them !" she whispered. Count Branciani started. Now he understood what she had done, and why she had done it. "Ask for the charge that makes me a prisoner," he said. Her husband's noble face gave her a chill of alarm. The Austrian spoke. "He is accused of being the chief of the Sequin Club." And then the Countess looked at her husband ; she sank at his feet. My heart breaks. Wilfrid ! Wilfrid ! You

will not wear that uniform ? Say—" Never, never ! " You will not go to the Austrian army—Wilfrid ? Would you be my enemy ? Brutes, knee-deep in blood ! with bloody fingers ! Ogres ! Would you be one of them ? To see me turn my head shivering with loathing as you pass ? This is why I sent for you, because I loved you, to entreat you, Wilfrid, from my soul, not to blacken the dear happy days when I knew you ! Will you hear me ? That woman is changeing you—doing all this. Resist her ! Think of me in this one thing ! Promise it, and I will go at once, and want no more. I will swear never to trouble you. Oh, Wilfrid ! it 's not so much our being enemies, but what you become, I think of. If I say to myself, " He also, who was once my lover—Oh ! paid murderer of my dear people ! " ' '

Emilia threw up both hands to her eyes : but Wilfrid, all on fire with a word, made one of her hands his own, repeating eagerly : ' Once ? once ? '

' Once ? ' she echoed him.

' " Once my love ? " ' said he. ' Not now ?—does it mean, " not now ? " My darling !—pardon me, I must say it. My beloved ! you said : " He who was once my lover " :—you said that. What does it mean ? Not that—not——? does it mean, all 's over ? Why did you bring me here ? You know I must love you for ever. Speak ! " Once ? " '

' " Once ? " ' Emilia was breathing quick, but her voice was well contained : ' Yes, I said " once." You were then.'

' Till that night in Devon ? '

' Let it be.'

' But you love me still ? '

' We won't speak of it.'

' I see ! You cannot forgive. Good heavens ! I think I remember your saying so once—*Once !* Yes,

then: you said it then, during our "Once"; when I little thought you would be merciless to me—who loved you from the first! the very first! I love you now! I wake up in the night, thinking I hear your voice. You haunt me. Cruel! cold!—who guards you and watches over you but the man you now hate? You sit there as if you could make yourself stone when you pleased. Did I not chastise that man Pericles publicly because he spoke a single lie of you? And by that act I have made an enemy to our house who may crush us in ruin. Do I regret it? No. I would do any madness, waste all my blood for you, die for you!'

Emilia's fingers received a final twist, and were dropped loose. She let them hang, looking sadly downward. Melancholy is the most irritating reply to passion, and Wilfrid's heart waxed fierce at the sight of her, grown beautiful!—grown elegant!—and to reject him! When, after a silence which his pride would not suffer him to break, she spoke to ask what Mr. Pericles had said of her, he was enraged, forgot himself, and answered: 'Something disgraceful.'

Deep colour came on Emilia. 'You struck him, Wilfrid?'

'It was a small punishment for his infamous lie, and, whatever might be the consequences, I would do it again.'

'Wilfrid, I have heard what he has said. Madame Marini has told me. I wish you had not struck him. I cannot think of him apart from the days when I had my voice. I cannot bear to think of your having hurt him. He was not to blame. That is, he did not say:—— it was not untrue.'

She took a breath to make this last statement, and continued with the same peculiar simplicity of distinctness, which a terrific thunder of 'What?' from Wilfrid

did not overbear : ‘ I was quite mad that day I went to him. I think, in my despair I spoke things that may have led him to fancy the truth of what he has said. On my honour, I do not know. And I cannot remember what happened after for the week I wandered alone about London. Mr. Powys found me on a wharf by the river at night.’

A groan burst from Wilfrid. Emilia’s instinct had divined the antidote that this would be to the poison of revived love in him, and she felt secure, though he had again taken her hand ; but it was she who nursed a mere sentiment now, while passion sprang in him, and she was not prepared for the delirium with which he enveloped her. She listened to his raving senselessly, beginning to think herself lost. Her tortured hands were kissed ; her eyes gazed into. He interpreted her stupefaction as contrition, her silence as delicacy, her changeing of colour as flying hues of shame : the partial coldness at their meeting he attributed to the burden on her mind, and muttering in a magnanimous sublimity that he forgave her, he claimed her mouth with force.

‘ Don’t touch me ! ’ cried Emilia, showing terror.

‘ Are you not mine ? ’

‘ You must not kiss me.’

Wilfrid loosened her waist, and became in a minute outwardly most cool and courteous.

‘ My successor may object. I am bound to consider him. Pardon me. ONCE !——’

The wretched insult and silly emphasis passed harmlessly from her : but a word had led her thoughts to Merthyr’s face, and what is meant by the phrase ‘ keeping oneself pure,’ stood clearly in Emilia’s mind. She had not winced ; and therefore Wilfrid judged that his shot had missed because there was no mark. With his eye upon her sideways, showing its circle wide as a parrot’s,

he asked her one of those questions that lovers sometimes permit between themselves. 'Has another——?' It is here as it was uttered. Eye-speech finished the sentence.

Rapidly a train of thought was started in Emilia, and she came to this conclusion, aloud: 'Then I love nobody!' For she had never kissed Merthyr, or wished for his kiss.

'You do not?' said Wilfrid, after a silence. 'You are generous in being candid.'

A pressure of intensest sorrow bowed his head. The real feeling in him stole to Emilia like a subtle flame.

'Oh! what can I do for you?' she cried.

'Nothing, if you do not love me,' he was replying mournfully, when, 'Yes! yes!' rushed to his lips; 'marry me: marry me to-morrow. You have loved me. "I am never to leave you!" Can you forget the night when you said it? Emilia! Marry me and you will love me again. You must. This man, whoever he is—— Ah! why am I such a brute! Come! be mine! Let me call you my own darling! Emilia!—or say quietly—"you have nothing to hope for": I shall not reproach you, believe me.'

He looked resigned. The abrupt transition had drawn her eyes to his. She faltered: 'I cannot be married.' And then: 'How could I guess that you felt in this way?'

'Who told me that I should?' said he. 'Your words have come true. You predicted that I should fly from "that woman," as you called her, and come to you. See! here it is exactly as you willed it. You—you are changed. You throw your magic on me, and then you are satisfied, and turn elsewhere.'

Emilia's conscience smote her with a verification of this charge, and she trembled, half-intoxicated for the

moment, by the aspect of her power. This filled her likewise with a dangerous pity for its victim ; and now, putting out both hands to him, her chin and shoulders raised entreatingly, she begged the victim to spare her any word of marriage.

'But you go, you run away from me—I don't know where you are or what you are doing,' said Wilfrid. 'And you leave me to that woman. She loves the Austrians, as you know. There ! I will ask nothing—only this : I will promise, if I quit the Queen's service for good, not to wear the white uniform——'

'Oh !' Emilia breathed inward deeply, scarce noticing the 'if' that followed ; nodding quick assent to the stipulation before she heard the nature of it. It was, that she should continue in England.

'Your word,' said Wilfrid ; and she pledged it, and did not think she was granting much in the prospect of what she gained.

'You will, then ?' said he.

'Yes, I will.'

'On your honour ?'

These reiterated questions were simply pretexts for steps nearer to the answering lips.

'And I may see you ?' he went on.

'Yes.'

'Wherever you are staying ? And sometimes alone ? Alone !——'

'Not if you do not know that I am to be respected,' said Emilia, huddled in the passionate fold of his arms. He released her instantly, and was departing, wounded ; but his heart counselled wiser proceedings.

'To know that you are in England, breathing the same air with me, near me ! is enough. Since we are to meet on those terms, let it be so. Let me only see you till some lucky shot puts me out of your way.'

This 'some lucky shot,' which is commonly pointed at themselves by the sentimental lovers, with the object of hitting the very centre of the hearts of obdurate damsels, glanced off Emilia's, which was beginning to throb with a comprehension of all that was involved in the word she had given.

'I have your promise?' he repeated: and she bent her head.

'Not,' he resumed, taking jealousy to counsel, now that he had advanced a step: 'Not that I would detain you against your will! I can't expect to make such a figure at the end of the piece as your Count Branciani—who, by the way, served his friends oddly, however well he may have served his country.'

'His friends?' She frowned.

'Did he not betray the conspirators? He handed in names, now and then.'

'Oh!' she cried, 'you understand us no better than an Austrian. He handed in names—yes! he was obliged to lull suspicion. Two or three of the least implicated volunteered to be betrayed by him; they went and confessed, and put the Government on a wrong track. Count Branciana made a dish of traitors—not true men—to satisfy the Austrian ogre. No one knew the head of the plot till that night of the spy. Do you not see?—he *weeded* the conspiracy!'

'Poor fellow!' Wilfrid answered, with a contracted mouth: 'I pity him for being cut off from his handsome wife.'

'I pity her for having to live,' said Emilia.

And so their duet dropped to a finish. He liked her phrase better than his own, and being denied any privileges, and feeling stupefied by a position which both enticed and stung him, he remarked that he presumed he must not detain her any longer; where-

upon she gave him her hand. He clutched the ready hand reproachfully.

'Good-bye,' said she.

'You are the first to say it,' he complained.

'Will you write to that Austrian colonel, your cousin, to say "Never! never!" to-morrow, Wilfrid?'

'While you are in England, I shall stay, be sure of that.'

She bade him give her love to all Brookfield.

'Once you had none to give but what I let you take back for the purpose!' he said. 'Farewell! I shall see the harp to-night. It stands in the old place. I will not have it moved or touched till you——'

'Ah! how kind you were, Wilfrid!'

'And how lovely you are!'

There was no struggle to preserve the backs of her fingers from his lips, and, as this time his phrase was not palpably obscured by the one it countered, artistic sentiment permitted him to go.

CHAPTER LIII

ALDERMAN'S BOUQUET

A MINUTE after his parting with Emilia, Wilfrid swung round in the street and walked back at great strides. 'What a fool I was not to see that she was *acting* indifference!' he cried. 'Let me have two seconds with her!' But how that was to be contrived his diplomatic brain refused to say. 'And what a stiff, formal fellow I was all the time!' He considered that he had not uttered a sentence in any way pointed to touch her heart. 'She must think I am still determined to marry that woman.

Wilfrid had taken his stand on the opposite side of the street, and beheld a male figure in the dusk, that went up to the house and then stood back scanning the windows. Wounded by his audacious irreverence toward the walls behind which his beloved was sheltered, Wilfrid crossed and stared at the intruder. It proved to be Braintop.

'How do you do, sir!—no! that can't be the house,' stammered Braintop, with a very earnest scrutiny.

'What house? what do you want?' inquired Wilfrid.

'Jenkinson,' was the name that won the honour of rescuing Braintop from this dilemma.

'No; it is Lady Gosstre's house: Miss Belloni is living there; and stop: you know her. Just wait, and take in two or three words from me, and notice particularly how she is looking, and the dress she wears. You can say—say that Mrs. Chump sent you to inquire after Miss Belloni's health.'

Wilfrid tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and wrote:

'*I can be free to-morrow. One word! I shall expect it, with your name in full.*'

But even in the red heat of passion his born diplomacy withheld his own signature. It was not difficult to override Braintop's scruples about presenting himself, and Wilfrid paced a sentinel measure awaiting the reply. 'Free to-morrow,' he repeated, with a glance at his watch under a lamp: and thus he soliloquized: 'What a time that fellow is! Yes, I can be free to-morrow if I will. I wonder what the deuce Gambier had to do in Monmouthshire. If he has been playing with my sister's reputation, he shall have short shrift. That fellow Braintop sees her now—my little Emilia! my bird! She won't have changed her dress till she has dined. If she changes it before she goes out—by

Jove, if she wears it to-night before all those people, that 'll mean "Good-bye" to me :—"Addio, caro," as those olive women say, with their damned cold languor, when they have given you up. *She 's* not one of them ! Good God ! she came into the room looking like a little Empress. I 'll swear her hand trembled when I went, though ! My sisters shall see her in that dress. She must have a clever lady's maid to have done that knot to her back hair. She 's getting as full of art as any of them—Oh ! lovely little darling ! And when she smiles and holds out her hand ! What is it—what is it about her ? Her upper lip isn't perfectly cut, there 's some fault with her nose, but I never saw such a mouth, or such a face. "Free to-morrow ?" Good God ! she 'll think I mean I 'm free to take a walk.'

At this view of the ghastly shortcoming of his letter as regards distinctness, and the prosaic misinterpretation it was open to, Wilfrid called his inventive wits to aid, and ran swiftly to the end of the street. He had become as like unto a lunatic as resemblance can approach identity. Commanding the length of the pavement for an instant, to be sure that no Braintop was in sight, he ran down a lateral street, but the stationer's shop he was in search of beamed nowhere visible for him, and he returned at the same pace to experience despair at the thought that he might have missed Braintop issuing forth, for whom he scoured the immediate neighbourhood, and overhauled not a few quiet gentlemen of all ages. 'An envelope !' That was the object of his desire, and for that he wooed a damsel passing jauntily with a jug in her hand, first telling her that he knew her name was Mary, at which singular piece of divination she betrayed much natural astonishment. But a fine round silver coin and an urgent request for an envelope, told her as plainly as a

blank confession that this was a lover. She informed him that she lived three streets off, where there were shops. 'Well, then,' said Wilfrid, 'bring me the envelope here, and you 'll have another opportunity of looking down the area.'

'Think of yourself,' replied she, saucily; but proved a diligent messenger. Then Wilfrid wrote on a fresh slip:

'*When I said "Free," I meant free in heart and without a single chain to keep me from you. From any moment that you please, I am free. This is written in the dark.*'

He closed the envelope, and wrote Emilia's name and the address as black as his pencil could achieve it, and with a smart double-knock he deposited the missive in the box. From his station opposite he guessed the instant when it was taken out, and from that judged when she would be reading it. Or perhaps she would not read it till she was alone? 'That must be her bed-room,' he said, looking for a light in one of the upper-windows; but the voice of a fellow who went by with: 'I should keep that to myself, if I was you,' warned him to be more discreet.

'Well, here I am. I can't leave the street,' quoth Wilfrid, to the stock of philosophy at his disposal. He burned with rage to think of how he might be exhibiting himself before Powys and his sister.

It was half-past nine when a carriage drove up to the door. Into this Mr. Powys presently handed Georgiana and Emilia. Braintop followed the ladies, and then the coachman received his instructions and drove away. Forthwith Wilfrid started in pursuit. He calculated that if his wind held till he could jump into a light cab, his legitimate prey Braintop might be caught. For, 'they can't be taking *him* to any party with them!' he chose to think, and it was a fair calculation that they

were simply conducting Braintop part of his way home. The run was pretty swift. Wilfrid's blood was fired by the pace, until, forgetting the traitor Braintop, up rose Truth from the bottom of the well in him, and he felt that his sole desire was to see Emilia once more—but once! that night. Running hard, in the midst of obstacles, and with eye and mind fixed on one object, disasters befell him. He knocked apples off a stall, and heard vehement hallooing behind: he came into collision with a gentleman of middle age courting digestion as he walked from his trusty dinner at home to his rubber at the Club: finally he rushed full tilt against a pot-boy who was bringing all his pots broadside to the flow of the street. 'By Jove! is this what they drink?' he gasped, and dabbed with his handkerchief at the beer-splashes, breathlessly hailing the looked-for cab, and, with hot brow and straightened-out fore-finger, telling the driver to keep *that* carriage in sight. The pot-boy had to be satisfied on his master's account, and then on his own, and away shot Wilfrid, wet with beer from throat to knee—to his chief protesting sense, nothing but an exhalation of beer! 'Is this what they drink?' he groaned, thinking lamentably of the tastes of the populace. All idea of going near Emilia was now abandoned. An outward application of beer quenched his frenzy. She seemed as an unattainable star seen from the depths of foul pits. 'Stop!' he cried from the window.

'Here we are, sir,' said the cabman.

The carriage had drawn up, and a footman's alarum awakened one of the houses. The wretched cabman had likewise drawn up right under the windows of the carriage. Wilfrid could have pulled the trigger of a pistol at his forehead that moment. He saw that Miss Ford had recognized him, and he at once bowed

elegantly. She dropped the window, and said, 'You are in evening dress, I think; we will take you in with us.'

Wilfrid hoped eagerly he might be allowed to hand them to the door, and made three skips across the mire. Emilia had her hands gathered away from the chances of seizure. In wild rage he began protesting that he could not possibly enter, when Georgiana said, 'I wish to speak to you,' and put feminine pressure upon him. He was almost on the verge of the word 'beer,' by way of despairing explanation, when the door closed behind him.

'Permit me to say a word to your recent companion. He is my father's clerk. I had to see him on urgent business; that is why I took this liberty,' he said, and retreated.

Braintop was still there, quietly posted, performing upon his head with a pocket hair-brush.

Wilfrid put Braintop's back to the light, and said, 'Is my shirt soiled?'

After a short inspection, Braintop pronounced that it was, 'just a little.'

'Do you smell anything?' said Wilfrid, and hung with frightful suspense on the verdict. 'A fellow upset beer on me.'

'It *is* beer!' sniffed Braintop.

'What on earth shall I do?' was the rejoinder; and Wilfrid tried to remember whether he had felt any sacred joy in touching Emilia's dress as they went up the steps to the door.

Braintop fumbled in the breast-pocket of his coat. 'I happen to have,' he said, rather shamefacedly—

'What is it?'

'Mrs. Chump gave it to me to-day. She always makes me accept something: I can't refuse. It 's

this :—the remains of some scent she insisted on my taking, in a bottle.'

Wilfrid plucked at the stopper with a reckless desperation, saturated his handkerchief, and worked at his breast as if he were driving a lusty dagger into it.

'What scent is it?' he asked hurriedly.

'Alderman's Bouquet, sir.'

'Of all the de*tes*table!—' Wilfrid had no time for more, owing to fresh arrivals. He hastened in, with his smiling, wary face, half trusting that there might after all be purification in Alderman's Bouquet, and promising heaven due gratitude if Emilia's senses discerned not the curse on him. In the hall a gust from the great opening contention between Alderman's Bouquet and bad beer, stifled his sickly hope. Frantic, but under perfect self-command outwardly, he glanced to right and left, for the suggestion of a means of escape. They were seven steps up the stairs before his wits prompted him to say to Georgiana, 'I have just heard very serious news from home. I fear——'

'What?—or, pardon me: does it call you away?' she asked, and Emilia gave him a steady look.

'I fear I cannot remain here. Will you excuse me?'

His face spoke plainly now of mental torture repressed. Georgiana put her hand out in full sympathy, and Emilia said, in her deep whisper, 'Let me hear to-morrow.' Then they bowed. Wilfrid was in the street again.

'Thank God, I've seen her!' was his first thought, overbearing 'What did she think of me?' as he sighed with relief at his escape. For, lo! the Branciani dress was *not* on her shoulders, and therefore he might imagine what he pleased :—that she had arrayed herself so during the day to delight his eyes: or that, he having seen her in it, she had determined none others should.

Though feeling utterly humiliated, he was yet happy. Driving to the station, he perceived starlight overhead, and blessed it; while his hand waved busily to conduct a current of fresh, oblivious air to his nostrils. The quiet heavens seemed all crowding to look down on the quiet circle of the firs, where Emilia's harp had first been heard by him, and they took her music, charming his blood with imagined harmonies, as he looked up to them. Thus all the way to Brookfield his fancy soared, plucked at from below by Alderman's Bouquet.

The Philosopher, up to this point rigidly excluded, rushes forward to the footlights to explain in a note, that Wilfrid, thus setting a perfume to contend with a stench, instead of waiting for time, change of raiment, and the broad lusty airs of heaven to blow him fresh again, symbolizes the vice of Sentimentalism, and what it is always doing. Enough!

CHAPTER LIV

THE EXPLOSION AT BROOKFIELD

'LET me hear to-morrow.' Wilfrid repeated Emilia's petition in the tone she had used, and sent a delight through his veins even with that clumsy effort of imitation. He walked from the railway to Brookfield through the circle of firs, thinking of some serious tale of home to invent for her ears to-morrow. Whatever it was, he was able to conclude it—'But all 's right now.' He noticed that the dwarf pine, under whose spreading head his darling sat when he saw her first, had been cut down. Its absence gave him an ominous chill.

The first sight that saluted him as the door opened, was a pile of Mrs. Chump's boxes: he listened, and her voice resounded from the library. Gainsford's eye expressed a discretion significant that there had been an explosion in the house.

'I shan't have to invent much,' said Wilfrid to himself, bitterly.

There was a momentary appearance of Adela at the library-door; and over her shoulder came an outcry from Mrs. Chump. Arabella then spoke: Mr. Pole and Cornelia following with a word, to which Mrs. Chump responded shrilly: 'Ye shan't talk to 'm, none of ye, till I 've had the bloom of his ear, now!' A confused hubbub of English and Irish ensued. The ladies drew their brother into the library.

Doubtless you have seen a favourite sketch of the imaginative youthful artist, who delights to pourtray scenes on a raft amid the tossing waters, where sweet and satiny ladies, in a pardonable abandonment to the exigencies of the occasion, are exhibiting the full energy and activity of creatures that existed before sentiment was born. The ladies of Brookfield had almost as utterly cast off their garb of lofty reserve and inscrutable superiority. They were begging Mrs. Chump to be, for pity's sake, silent. They were arguing with the woman. They were remonstrating—to such an extent as this, in reply to an infamous outburst: 'No, no: indeed, Mrs. Chump, indeed!' They rose, as she rose, and stood about her, motioning a beseeching emphasis with their hands. Not visible for one second was the intense indignation at their fate which Wilfrid, spying keenly into them, perceived. This taught him that the occasion was as grave as could be. In spite of the oily words his father threw from time to time abruptly on the tumult, he guessed what had happened.

Briefly, Mrs. Chump, aided by Braintop, her squire, had at last hunted Mr. Pericles down, and the wrathful Greek had called her a beggar. With devilish malice he had reproached her for speculating in such and such Bonds, and sending ventures to this and that hemisphere, laughing infernally as he watched her growing amazement. 'Ye 're jokin', Mr. Paricles,' she tried to say and think; but the very naming of poverty had given her shivers. She told him how she had come to him because of Mr. Pole's reproach, which accused her of causing the rupture. Mr. Pericles twisted the waxy points of his moustache. 'I shall advise you, go home,' he said; 'go to a lawyer: say, "I will see my affairs, how zey stand." Ze man will find Pole is ruined. It may be—I do not know—Pole has left a little of your money; yes, ma'am, it may be.'

The end of the interview saw Mrs. Chump flying past Mr. Pericles to where Braintop stood awaiting her with a meditative speculation on that official promotion which in his attention to the lady he anticipated. It need scarcely be remarked that he was astonished to receive a scent-bottle on the spot, as the only reward his meritorious service was probably destined ever to meet with. Breathless in her panic, Mrs. Chump assured him she was a howling beggar, and the smell of a scent was 'like a crool blow to her'; above all, the smell of Alderman's Bouquet, which Chump—'tell'n a lie, ye know, Mr. Braintop, said was after *him*. And I, smell'n at 't over 'n Ireland—a raw garl I was—I just thought 'm a prince, the little sly fella! And oh! I 'm a beggar, I am!' With which, she shouted in the street, and put Braintop to such confusion that he hailed a cab recklessly, declaring to her she had no time to lose, if she wished to catch the train. Mrs. Chump requested the cabman that as a man possessed of a feeling heart

for the interests of a helpless woman, he would drive fast; and, at the station, disputed his charge on the ground of the knowledge already imparted to him of her precarious financial state. In this frame of mind she fell upon Brookfield, and there was clamour in the house. Wilfrid arrived two hours after Mrs. Chump. For that space the ladies had been saying over and over again empty words to pacify her. The task now devolved on their brother. Mr. Pole, though he had betrayed nothing under the excitement of the sudden shock, had lost the proper control of his mask. Wilfrid commenced by fixedly listening to Mrs. Chump until for the third time her breath had gone. Then, taking on a smile, he said: 'Perhaps you are aware that Mr. Pericles has a particular reason for animosity to me. We 've disagreed together, that 's all. I suppose it 's the habit of those fellows to attack a whole family where one member of it offends them.' As soon as the meaning of this was made clear to Mrs. Chump, she caught it to her bosom for comfort; and finding it gave less than at the moment she required, she flung it away altogether; and then moaned, a suppliant, for it once more. 'The only thing, if you are in a state of alarm about my father's affairs, is for him to show you by his books that his house is firm,' said Wilfrid, now that he had so far helped to eject suspicion from her mind.

'Will Pole do ut?' ejaculated Mrs. Chump, half off her seat.

'Of course I will—of course! of course. Haven't I told you so?' said Mr. Pole, blinking mightily from his arm-chair over the fire. 'Sit down, Martha.'

'Oh! but how 'll I understand ye, Pole?' she cried.

'I 'll do my best to assist in explaining,' Wilfrid condescended to say.

The ladies were touched when Mrs. Chump replied, with something of a curtsey, 'I 'll thank ye vary much, sir.' She added immediately, 'Mr. Wilfrud,' as if correcting the 'sir,' for sounding cold.

It was so trustful and simple, that it threw a light on the woman under which they had not yet beheld her. Compassion began to stir in their bosoms, and with it an inexplicable sense of shame, which soon threw any power of compassion into the background. They dared not ask themselves whether it was true that their father had risked the poor thing's money in some desperate stake. What hopeful force was left to them they devoted to her property, and Adela determined to pray that night for its safe preservation. The secret feeling in the hearts of the ladies was, that in putting them on their trial with poverty, Celestial Powers would never at the same time think it necessary to add disgrace. Consequently, and as a defence against the darker dread, they now, for the first time, fully believed that monetary ruin had befallen their father. They were civil to Mrs. Chump, and forgiving toward her brogue, and her naked outcries of complaint and suddenly-suggested panic; but their pity, save when some odd turn in her conduct moved them, was reserved dutifully for their father. His wretched sensations at the pouring of a storm of tears from the exhausted creature, caused Arabella to rise and say to Mrs. Chump kindly, 'Now let me take you to bed.'

But such a novel mark of tender civility caused the woman to exclaim: 'Oh, dear! if ye don't sound like wheedlin' to keep me blind.'

Even this was borne with. 'Come; it will do you good to rest,' said Arabella.

'And how 'll I sleep?'

'By "shutting my eye-peeps,"—as I used to tell my

old nurse,' said Adela; and Mrs. Chump, accustomed to an occasional (though not public) bit of wheedling from her, was partially reassured.

'I 'll sit with you till you do sleep,' said Arabella.

'Suppose,' Mrs. Chump moaned, 'suppose I 'm too poor aver to repay ye? If I 'm a bankrup'?—oh!'

Arabella smiled. 'Whatever I may do is certainly not done for a remuneration, and such a service as this, at least, you need not speak of.'

Mrs. Chump's evident surprise, and doubt of the honesty of the change in her manner, caused Arabella very acutely to feel its dishonesty. She looked at Cornelia with envy. The latter lady was leaning meditatively, her arm on a side of her chair, like a pensive queen, with a ready, mild, embracing look for the company. 'Posture' seemed always to triumph over action.

Before quitting the room, Mrs. Chump asked Mr. Pole whether he would be up early the next morning.

'Very early,—you beat me, if you can,' said he, aware that the question was put as a test to his sincerity.

'Oh, dear! Suppose it 's onnly a false alarrm of the 'bomunable Mr. Paricles—which annybody 'd have listened to, ye know that!' said Mrs. Chump, going forth.

She stopped in the doorway, and turned her head round, sniffing, in a very pronounced way. 'Oh! it 's you,' she flashed on Wilfrid; 'it 's you, my dear, that smell so like poor Chump. Oh! if we 're not rooned, won't we dine together! Just give me a kiss, please. The smell of ye 's comfortin'.'

Wilfrid bent his cheek forward, affecting to laugh, though the subject was tragic to him.

'Oh! perhaps I 'll sleep, and not look in the mornin'

like that beastly tallow, Mr. Paricles says I spent such a lot of money on, speculatin'—whew, I hate ut!—and hemp too! Me!—Martha Chump! Do I want to hang myself, and burn forty thousand pounds worth o' candles round my corpse danglin' there? Now, there, now! Is that sense? And what 'd Pole want to buy me all that grease for? And where 'd I keep ut, I 'll ask ye? And sure they wouldn't make me a bankrup' on such a pretence as that. For, where 's the Judge that 's got the heart? '

Having apparently satisfied her reason with these interrogations, Mrs. Chump departed, shaking her head at Wilfrid: 'Ye smile so nice, ye do!' by the way. Cornelia and Adela then rose, and Wilfrid was left alone with his father.

It was natural that he should expect the moment for entire confidence between them to have come. He crossed his legs, leaning over the fireplace, and waited. The old man perceived him, and made certain humming sounds, as of preparation. Wilfrid was half tempted to think he wanted assistance, and signified attention; upon which Mr. Pole became immediately absorbed in profound thought.

'Singular it is, you know,' he said at last, with a candid air, 'people who know nothing about business have the oddest ideas—no common sense in 'em!'

After that he fell dead silent.

Wilfrid knew that it would be hard for him to speak. To encourage him, he said: 'You mean Mrs. Chump, sir?'

'Oh! silly woman—absurd! No, I mean all of you; every man Jack, as Martha 'd say. You seem to think —but, well! there! let 's go to bed.'

'To bed?' cried Wilfrid, frowning.

'Why, when it 's two or three o'clock in the morning,

what 's an old fellow to do ? My feet are cold, and I 'm queer in the back—can't talk ! Light my candle, young gentleman—my candle there, don't you see it ? And you look none of the freshest. A nap on your pillow 'll do you no harm.'

'I wanted to talk to you a little, sir,' said Wilfrid, about as much perplexed as he was irritated.

'Now, no talk of bankers' books to-night ! ' rejoined his father. 'I can't and won't. No cheques written 'tween night and morning. That 's positive. There ! there 's two fingers. Shall have three to-morrow morning—a pen in 'em, perhaps.'

With which wretched pleasantry the little merchant nodded to his son, and snatching up his candle, trotted to the door.

'By the way, give a look round my room upstairs, to see all right when you 're going to turn in yourself,' he said, before disappearing.

The two fingers given him by his father to shake at parting, had told Wilfrid more than the words. And yet how small were these troubles around him compared with what he himself was suffering ! He looked forward to the bitter-sweet hour verging upon dawn, when he should be writing to Emilia things to melt the vilest obduracy. The excitement which had greeted him on his arrival at Brookfield was to be thanked for its having made him partially forget his humiliation. He had, of course, sufficient rational feeling to be chagrined by calamity, but his dominant passion sucked sustaining juices from every passing event.

In obedience to his father's request, Wilfrid went presently into the old man's bed-room, to see that all was right. The curtains of the bed were drawn close, and the fire in the grate burnt steadily. Calm sleep seemed to fill the chamber. Wilfrid was retiring, with a revived

anger at his father's want of natural confidence in him, or cowardly secresy. His name was called, and he stopped short.

'Yes, sir?' he said.

'Door 's shut?'

'Shut fast.'

The voice, buried in curtains, came after a struggle.

'You 've done this, Wilfrid. Now, don't answer:—I can't stand talk. And you must undo it. Pericles *can*, if he likes. That 's enough for you to know. He *can*. He won't see me. You know why. If he breaks with me—it 's a common case in any business—I 'm . . . we 're involved together.' Then followed a deep sigh. The usual crisp brisk way of his speaking was resumed in hollow tones: 'You must stop it. Now, don't answer. Go to Pericles to-morrow. You must. Nothing wrong, if you go at once.'

'But, sir! Good heaven!' interposed Wilfrid, horrified by the thought of the penance here indicated.

The bed shook violently.

'If not,' was uttered with a sort of muted vehemence, 'there 's another thing you can do. Go to the undertaker's, and order coffins for us all. There—good night!'

The bed shook again. Wilfrid stood eyeing the mysterious hangings, as if some dark oracle had spoken from behind them. In fear of irritating the old man, and almost as much in fear of bringing on himself a revelation of the frightful crisis that could only be averted by his apologizing personally to the man he had struck, Wilfrid stole from the room.

CHAPTER LV

THE TRAGEDY OF SENTIMENT

THERE is a man among our actors here who may not be known to you. It had become the habit of Sir Purcell Barrett's mind to behold himself as under a peculiarly malign shadow. Very young men do the same, if they are much afflicted: but this is because they are still boys enough to have the natural sense to be ashamed of ill-luck, even when they lack courage to struggle against it. The reproaching of Providence by a man of full growth, comes to some extent from his meanness, and chiefly from his pride. He remembers that the old Gods selected great heroes whom to persecute, and it is his compensation for material losses to conceive himself a distinguished mark for the Powers of air. One who wraps himself in this delusion may have great qualities; he cannot be of a very contemptible nature; and in this place we will discriminate more closely than to call him fool. Had Sir Purcell sunk or bent under the thong that pursued him, he might, after a little healthy moaning, have gone along as others do. Who knows? —though a much persecuted man, he might have become so degraded as to have looked forward with cheerfulness to his daily dinner; still despising, if he pleased, the soul that would invent a sauce. I mean to say, he would, like the larger body of our sentimentalists, have acquiesced in our simple humanity, but without sacrificing a scruple to its grossness, or going arm-in-arm with it by any means. Sir Purcell, however, never sank, and never bent. He was invariably erect before men, and he did not console himself with a murmur

in secret. He had lived much alone; eating alone; thinking alone. To complain of a father is, to a delicate mind, a delicate matter, and Sir Purcell was a gentleman to all about him. His chief affliction in his youth, therefore, kept him dumb. A gentleman to all about him, he unhappily forgot what was due to his own nature. Must we not speak under pressure of a grief? Little people should know that they must: but then the primary task is to teach them that they are little people. For, if they repress the outcry of a constant irritation, and the complaint against injustice, they lock up a feeding devil in their hearts, and they must have vast strength to crush him there. Strength they must have to kill him, and freshness of spirit to live without him, after he has once entertained them with his most comforting discourses. Have you listened to him, ever? He does this:—he plays to you your music (it is he who first teaches thousands that they have any music at all, so guess what a dear devil he is!); and when he has played this ravishing melody, he falls to upon a burlesque contrast of hurdy-gurdy and bagpipe squeal and bellow and drone, which is meant for the music of the world. How far sweeter was yours! This charming devil Sir Purcell had nursed from childhood.

As a child, between a flighty mother and a father verging to insanity from caprice, he had grown up with ideas of filial duty perplexed, and with a fitful love for either, that was not attachment: a baffled natural love, that in teaching us to brood on the hardness of our lot, lays the foundation for a perniciously mystical self-love. He had waxed precociously philosophic, when still a junior. His father had kept him by his side, giving him no profession beyond that of the obedient expectant son and heir. His first allusion to the youth's

dependency had provoked their first breach, which had been widened by many an ostentatious forgiveness on the one hand, and a dumbly-protesting submission on the other. His mother died away from her husband's roof. The old man then sought to obliterate her utterly. She left her boy a little money, and the injunction of his father was, that he was never to touch it. He inherited his taste for music from her, and his father vowed, that if ever he laid hand upon a musical instrument again, he would be disinherited. All these signs of a vehement spiteful antagonism to reason, the young man might have treated more as his father's misfortune than his own, if he could only have brought himself to acknowledge that such a thing as madness stigmatized his family. But the sentimental mind conceived it as 'monstrous impiety' to bring this accusation against a parent who did not break windows, or grin to deformity. He behaved toward him as to a reasonable person, and felt the rebellious rancour instead of the pity. Thus sentiment came in the way of pity. By degrees, Sir Purcell transferred all his father's madness to the Fates by whom he was persecuted. There was evidently madness somewhere, as his shuddering human nature told him. It did not offend his sentiment to charge this upon the order of the universe.

Against such a wild-hitting madness, or concentrated ire of the superior Powers, Sir Purcell stood up, taking blow upon blow. As organist of Hillford Church, he brushed his garments, and put a polish on his apparel, with an energetic humility that looked like unconquerable patience; as though he had said: 'While life is left in me, I will be seen for what I am.' We will vary it—'For what I think myself.' In reality, he fought no battle. He had been dead-beaten from his boyhood. Like the old Spanish Governor, the walls of whose

fortress had been thrown down by an earthquake, and who painted streets to deceive the enemy, he was rendered safe enough by his astuteness, except against a traitor from within.

One who goes on doggedly enduring, doggedly doing his best, must subsist on comfort of a kind that is likely to be black comfort. The mere piping of the musical devil shall not suffice. In Sir Purcell's case, it had long seemed a magnanimity to him that he should hold to a life so vindictively scourged, and his comfort was that he had it at his own disposal. To know so much, to suffer, and still to refrain, flattered his pride. 'The term of my misery is in my hand,' he said, softened by the reflection. It is our lowest philosophy.

But, when the heart of a man so fashioned is stirred to love a woman, it has a new vital force, new health, and cannot play these solemn pranks. The flesh, and all its fatality, claims him. When Sir Purcell became acquainted with Cornelia, he found the very woman his heart desired, or certainly a most admirable picture of her. It was, perhaps, still more to the lady's credit, if she was only striving to be what he was learning to worship. The beneficial change wrought in him, made him enamoured of healthy thinking and doing. Had this, as a result of sharp mental overhauling, sprung from himself, there would have been hope for him. Unhappily, it was dependent on her who inspired it. He resolved that life should be put on a fresh trial in her person; and expecting that naturally to fail, of which he had always entertained a base conception, he was perforce brought to endow her with unexampled virtues, in order to keep any degree of confidence tolerably stedfast in his mind. The lady accepted the decorations thus bestowed on her, with much grace and willingness. She consented, little aware of her heroism, to shine

forth as an 'ideal'; and to this he wantonly pinned his faith. Alas! in our world, where all things must move, it becomes, by-and-by, manifest that an 'ideal,' or idol, which you will, has not been gifted with two legs. What is, then, the duty of the worshipper? To make, as I should say, some compromise between his superstitious reverence and his recognition of facts. Cornelia, on her pedestal, could not prefer such a request plainly; but it would have afforded her exceeding gratification, if the man who adored her had quietly taken her up and fixed her in a fresh post, of his own choosing entirely, in the new circles of changeing events. Far from doing that, he appeared to be unaware that they went, with the varying days, through circles, forming and reforming. He walked rather as a man down a lengthened corridor, whose light to which he turns is in one favourite corner, visible till he reaches the end. What Cornelia was, in the first flaming of his imagination around her, she was always, unaffected by circumstance, to remain. It was very hard. The 'ideal' did feel the want—if not of legs—of a certain tolerant allowance for human laws on the part of her worshipper; but he was remorselessly reverential, both by instinct and of necessity. Women are never quite so mad in sentimentalism as men.

We have now looked into the hazy interior of their systems—our last halt, I believe, and last examination of machinery, before Emilia quits England.

About the time of the pairing of the birds, and subsequent to the Brookfield explosion, Cornelia received a letter from her lover, bearing the tone of a summons. She was to meet him by the decayed sallow—the 'fruitless tree,' as he termed it. Startled by this abruptness, her difficulties made her take counsel of her dignity. 'He knows that these clandestine meetings degrade me.

He is wanting in faith, to require constant assurances. He will not understand my position!' She remembered the day at Besworth, of which Adela (somewhat needlessly, perhaps) had told her; that it had revealed two of the family, in situations censurable before a gossiping world, however intrinsically blameless. That day had been to the ladies a lesson of deference to opinion. It was true that Cornelia had met her lover since, but she was then unembarrassed. She had now to share in the duties of the household—duties abnormal, hideous, incredible. Her incomprehensible father was absent in town. Daily Wilfrid conducted Adela thither on mysterious business, and then Mrs. Chump was left to Arabella and herself in the lonely house. Numberless things had to be said for the quieting of this creature, who every morning came downstairs with the exclamation that she could no longer endure her state of uncertainty, and was 'off to a lawyer.' It was useless to attempt the posture of a reply. Words, and energetic words, the woman demanded, not expostulations—petitions that she would be respectful to the house before the household. Yes, occasionally (so gross was she!) she had to be fed with lies. Arabella and Cornelia heard one another mouthing these dreadful things, with a wretched feeling of contemptuous compassion. The trial was renewed daily, and it was a task, almost a physical task, to hold the woman back from London, till the hour of lunch came. If they kept her away from her bonnet till then they were safe.

At this meal they had to drink champagne with her. Diplomatic Wilfrid had issued the order, with the object, first, of dazzling her vision; and secondly, to set the wheels of her brain in swift motion. The effect was marvellous; and, had it not been for her determination never to drink alone, the miserable ladies might have

applauded it. Adela, on the rare days when she was fortunate enough to reach Brookfield in time for dinner, was surprised to hear her sisters exclaim, 'Oh, the hatefulness of that champagne!' She enjoyed it extremely. She, poor thing, had again to go through a round of cabs and confectioners' shops in London. 'If they had said, "Oh, the hatefulness of those buns and cold chickens!"' she thought to herself. Not objecting to champagne at lunch with any particular vehemence, she was the less unwilling to tell her sisters what she had to do for Wilfrid daily.

'Three times a week I go to see Emilia at Lady Gosstre's town house. Mr. Powys has gone to Italy, and Miss Ford remains, looking, if I can read her, such a temper. On the other days I am taken by Wilfrid to the arcades, or we hire a brougham to drive round the park,—for nothing but the chance of seeing that girl an instant. Don't tell me it 's to meet Lady Charlotte! That lovely and obliging person it is certainly not my duty to undeceive. She 's now at Stornley, and speaks of our affairs to everybody, I dare say. Twice a week Wilfrid—oh! quite casually!—calls on Miss Ford, and is gratified, I suppose; for this is the picture:—There sits Emilia, one finger in her cheek, and the thumb under her chin, and she keeps looking down *so*. Opposite is Miss Ford, doing some work—making lint for patriots, probably. Then Wilfrid, addressing commonplaces to her; and then Emilia's father—a personage, I assure you! up against the window, with a violin. I feel a bitter edge on my teeth still! What do you think he does to please his daughter for *one whole hour*? He draws his fingers—does nothing else; she won't let him; she won't hear a tune—up the strings in the most horrible caterwaul, up and down. It is really like a thousand lunatics

questioning and answering, and is enough to make you mad; but there that girl sits, listening. Exactly in this attitude—*so*. She scarcely ever looks up. My brother talks, and occasionally steals a glance that way. We passed one whole hour as I have described. In the middle of it, I happened to look at Wilfrid's face, while the violin was wailing down. I fancied I heard the despair of one of those huge masks in a pantomime. I was almost choked.'

When Adela had related thus much, she had to prevent downright revolt, and spoil her own game, by stating that Wilfrid did not leave the house for his special pleasure, and a word, as to the efforts he was making to see Mr. Pericles, convinced the ladies that his situation was as pitiable as their own.

Cornelia refused to obey her lover's mandate, and wrote briefly. She would not condescend to allude to the unutterable wretchedness afflicting her, but spoke of her duty to her father being foremost in her prayers for strength. Sir Purcell interpreted this as indicating the beginning of their alienation. He chided her gravely in an otherwise pleasant letter. She was wrong to base her whole reply upon the little sentence of reproach, but self-justification was necessary to her spirit. Indeed, an involuntary comparison of her two suitors was forced on her, and, dry as was Sir Twickenham's mind, she could not but acknowledge that he had behaved with an extraordinary courtesy, amounting to chivalry, in his suit. On two occasions he had declined to let her be pressed to decide. He came to the house, and went, like an ordinary visitor. She was indebted to him for that splendid luxury of indecision, which so few of the maids of earth enjoy for a lengthened term. The rude shakings given her by Sir Purcell, at a time when she needed all her power of dreaming, to support the horror

of accumulated facts, was almost resented. 'He as much as says he doubts me, when this is what I endure!' she cried to herself, as Mrs. Chump ordered her champagne-glass to be filled, with 'Now, Cornelia, my dear; if it 's bad luck we 're in for, there 's nothin' cheats ut like champagne,' and she had to put the (to her) nauseous bubbles to her lips. Sir Purcell had not been told of her tribulations, and he had not expressed any doubt of her truth; but sentimentalists can read one another with peculiar accuracy through their bewitching gauzes. She read his unwritten doubt, and therefore expected her unwritten misery to be read.

So it is when you play at Life! When you will not go straight, you get into this twisting maze. Now he wrote coldly, and she had to repress a feeling of resentment at that also. She ascribed the changes of his tone fundamentally to want of faith in her, and absolutely, during the struggle she underwent, she by this means somehow strengthened her idea of her own faithfulness. She would have phrased her projected line of conduct thus: 'I owe every appearance of assent to my poor father's scheme, that will spare his health. I owe him everything, save the positive sacrifice of my hand.' In fact, she meant to do her duty to her father up to the last moment, and then, on the extreme verge, to remember her duty to her lover. But she could not write it down, and tell her lover as much. She knew instinctively that, facing the eyes, it would not look well. Perhaps, at another season, she would have acted and thought with less folly; but the dull pain of her great uncertainty, and the little stinging whips daily applied to her, exaggerated her tendency to self-deception. 'Who has ever had to bear so much?—what slave?' she would exclaim, as a refuge from the edge of his veiled irony. For a slave has, if not selection of what

he will eat and drink, the option of rejecting what is distasteful. Cornelia had not. She had to act a part every day with Mrs. Chump, while all those she loved, and respected, and clung to, were in the same conspiracy. The consolation of hating, or of despising, her tormentress was denied. The thought that the poor helpless creature had been possibly ruined by them, chastened Cornelia's reflections mightily, and taught her to walk very humbly through the duties of the day. Her powers of endurance were stretched to their utmost. A sublime affliction would, as she felt bitterly, have enlarged her soul. This sordid misery narrowed it. Why did not her lover, if his love was passionate, himself cut the knot—claim her, and put her to a quick decision? She conceived that were he to bring on a supreme crisis, her heart would declare itself. But he appeared to be wanting in that form of courage. Does it become a beggar to act such valiant parts? perhaps he was even then replying from his stuffy lodgings.

The Spring was putting out primroses,—the first handwriting of the year,—as Sir Purcell wrote to her prettily. Desire for fresh air, and the neighbourhood of his beloved, sent him on a journey down to Hillford. Near the gates of the Hillford station, he passed Wilfrid and Adela, hurrying to catch the up-train, and received no recognition. His face scarcely changed colour, but the birds on a sudden seemed to pipe far away from him. He asked himself, presently, what were those black circular spots which flew chasing along the meadows and the lighted walks. It was with an effort that he got the landscape close about his eyes, and remembered familiar places. He walked all day, making occupation by directing his steps to divers eminences that gave a view of the Brookfield chimneys. After night-fall he found himself in the firwood, approaching

the 'fruitless tree.' He had leaned against it musingly, for a time, when he heard voices, as of a couple confident in their privacy.

The footman, Gainsford, was courting a maid of the Tinleys, and here, being midway between the two houses, they met. He had to obtain pardon for tardiness, by saying that dinner at Brookfield had been delayed for the return of Mr. Pole. The damsel's questions showed her far advanced in knowledge of affairs at Brookfield, and may account for Laura Tinley's gatherings of latest intelligence concerning those 'odd girls,' as she impudently called the three.

'Oh! don't you listen!' was the comment pronounced on Gainsford's stock of information. But, he told nothing signally new. She wished to hear something new and striking, 'because,' she said, 'when I unpin Miss Laura at night, I 'm as likely as not to get a silk dress that ain't been worn more than half-a-dozen times—if I manage. When I told her that Mr. Albert, her brother, had dined at your place last Thursday—demeaning of himself, I do think—there!—I got a pair of silk stockings,—not letting her see I knew what it was for, of course! and about Mrs. Dump,—Stump;—I can't recollect the woman's name; and her calling of your master a bankrupt, right out, and wanting her money of him,—there! if Miss Laura didn't give me a pair of lavender kid-gloves out of her box!—and I wish you would leave my hands alone, when you know I shouldn't be so silly as to wear them in the dark; and for you, indeed!'

But Gainsford persisted, upon which there was fooling. All this was too childish for Sir Purcell to think it necessary to give warning of his presence. They passed, and when they had gone a short way the damsel cried, 'Well, that is something,' and stopped. 'Married in

a month!' she exclaimed. 'And you don't know which one?'

'No,' returned Gainsford; 'master said "one of you" as they was at dinner, just as I come into the room. He was in jolly spirits, and kept going so: "What 's a month!—champagne, Gainsford," and you should have seen Mrs.—not Stump, but Chump. She 'll be tipsy to-night, and I shall bust if I have to carry of her upstairs. Well, she is fun!—she don't mind handin' you a five-shilling piece when she 's done tender: but I have nearly lost my place two or three time along of that woman. She 'd split logs with laughing:—no need of beetle and wedges! "Och!" she sings out, "by the piper!"—and Miss Cornelia sitting there—and, Arrah!—bother the woman's Irish,' (thus Gainsford gave up the effort at imitation, with a spirited Briton's mild contempt for what he could not do) 'she pointed out Miss Cornelia and said she was like the tinker's dog:—there 's the bone he wants himself, and the bone he don't want anybody else to have. Aha! ain't it good?'

'Oh! the tinker's dog! won't I remember that!' said the damsel, 'she can't be such a fool.'

'Well, I don't know,' Gainsford meditated critically. 'She is; and yet she ain't, if you understand me. What I feel about her is—hang it! she makes ye laugh.'

Sir Purcell moved from the shadow of the tree as noiselessly as he could, so that this enamoured couple might not be disturbed. He had already heard more than he quite excused himself for hearing in such a manner, and having decided not to arrest the man and make him relate exactly what Mr. Pole had spoken that evening at the Brookfield dinner-table, he hurried on his return to town.

It was not till he had sight of his poor home; the solitary company of chairs; the sofa looking bony and

comfortless as an old female house drudge; the table with his desk on it; and, through folding-doors, his cold and narrow bed; not till then did the fact of his great loss stand before him, and accuse him of living. He seated himself methodically and wrote to Cornelia. His fancy pictured her now as sharp to every turn of language and fall of periods: and to satisfy his imagined, rigorous critic, he wrote much in the style of a newspaper leading article. No one would have thought that tragic meaning underlay those choice and sounding phrases. On re-perusing the composition, he rejected it, but only to produce one of a similar cast. He could not get to nature in his tone. He spoke aloud a little sentence now and then, that had the ring of a despairing tenderness. Nothing of the sort inhabited his written words, wherein a strained philosophy and ironic resignation went on stilts. 'I should desire to see you once before I take a step that some have not considered more than commonly serious,' came toward the conclusion; and the idea was toyed with till he signed his name. 'A plunge into the deep is of little moment to one who has been stripped of all clothing. Is he not a wretch who stands and shivers still?' This letter, ending with a short and not imperious, or even urgent, request for an interview, on the morrow by the 'fruitless tree,' he sealed for delivery into Cornelia's hands some hours before the time appointed. He then wrote a clear business letter to his lawyer, and one of studied ambiguity to a cousin on his mother's side. His father's brother, Percival Barrett, to whom the estates had gone, had offered him an annuity of five hundred pounds: 'though he had, as his nephew was aware, a large family.' Sir Purcell had replied: 'Let me be the first to consider your family,' rejecting the benevolence. He now addressed his cousin, saying: 'What would you think

of one who accepts such a gift ?—of me, were you to hear that I had bowed my head and extended my hand ? Think this, if ever you hear of it : that I have acceded for the sake of winning the highest prize humanity can bestow : that I certainly would not have done it for aught less than the highest.' After that he went to his narrow bed. His determination was to write to his uncle, swallowing bitter pride, and to live a pensioner, if only Cornelia came to her tryst, ' the last he would ask of her,' as he told her. Once face to face with his beloved, he had no doubt of his power ; and this feeling which he knew her to share, made her reluctance to meet him more darkly suspicious.

As he lay in the little black room, he thought of how she would look when a bride, and of the peerless beauty towering over any shades of earthliness which she would present. His heated fancy conjured up every device and charm of sacredness and adoring rapture about that white veiled shape, until her march to the altar assumed the character of a religious procession—a sight to awe mankind ! And where, when she stood before the minister in her saintly humility, grave and white, and tall—where was the man whose heart was now racing for that goal at her right hand ? He felt at the troubled heart and touched two fingers on the rib, mock-quietingly, and smiled. Then with great deliberation he rose, lit a candle, unlocked a case of pocket-pistols, and loaded them : but a second idea coming into his head, he drew the bullet out of one, and lay down again with a luxurious speculation on the choice any hand might possibly make of the life-sparing or death-giving of those two weapons. In his next half-slumber he was twice startled by a report of fire-arms in a church, when a crowd of veiled women and masked men rushed to the opening, and a woman throwing up the veil from her

face knelt to a corpse that she lifted without effort, and weeping, laid it in a grave, where it rested and was at peace, though multitudes hurried over it, and new stars came and went, and the winds were strange with new tongues. The sleeper saw the morning upon that corpse when light struck his eyelids, and he awoke like a man who knew no care.

His landlady's little female scrubber was working at the grate in his sitting-room. He had endured many a struggle to prevent service of this nature being done for him by one of the sex—at least, to prevent it within his hearing and sight. He called to her to desist; but she replied that she had her mistress's orders. Thereupon he maintained that the grate did not want scrubbing. The girl took this to be a matter of opinion, not a challenge to controversy, and continued her work in silence. Irritated by the noise, but anxious not to seem harsh, he said: 'What on earth are you about, when there was no fire there yesterday?'

'There ain't no stuff for a fire now, sir,' said she.

'I tell you I did not light it.'

'It 's been and lit itself then,' she mumbled.

'Do you mean to say you found the fire burnt out, when you entered the room this morning?'

She answered that she had found it so, and lots of burnt paper lying about.

The symbolism of this fire burnt out, that had warmed and cheered none, oppressed his fancy, and he left the small maid-of-all-work to triumph with black-lead and brushes.

She sang out, when she had done: 'If you please, sir, missus have had a hamper up from the country, and would you like a country aig, which is quite fresh, and new lay. And missus say, she can't trust the bloaters about here bein' Yarmouth, but there 's a soft roe in

one she 've squeezed ; and am I to stop a water-cress woman, when the last one sold you them, and all the leaves jellied behind 'em, so as no washin' could save you from swallowin' some, missus say ? '

Sir Purcell rolled over on his side. ' Is this going to be my epitaph ? ' he groaned ; for he was not a man particular in his diet, or exacting in choice of roes, or panting for freshness in an egg. He wondered what his landlady could mean by sending up to him, that morning of all others, to tempt his appetite after her fashion. ' I thought I remembered eating nothing but toast in this place ' ; he observed to himself. A grunting answer had to be given to the little maid, ' Toast as usual.' She appeared satisfied, but returned again, when he was in his bath, to ask whether he had said ' No toast to-day ? '

' Toast till the day of my death—tell your mistress that ! ' he replied ; and partly from shame at his unaccountable vehemence, he paused in his sponging, meditated, and chilled. An association of toast with spectral things grew in his mind, when presently the girl's voice was heard : ' Please, sir, you *did* say you 'd have toast, or not, this morning ? ' It cost him an effort to answer simply, ' Yes.'

That she should continue, ' *Not* sir ? ' appeared like perversity. ' No aig ? ' was maddening.

' Well, no ; never mind it this morning,' said he.

' Not this morning,' she repeated.

' Then it will not be till the day of your death, as you said,' she is thinking that, was the idea running in his brain, and he was half ready to cry out ' Stop,' and renew his order for toast, that he might seem consecutive. The childishness of the wish made him ask himself what it mattered. ' I said " Not *till* the day " ; so, none to-day would mean that I have reached the day.'

Shivering with the wet on his pallid skin, he thought this over.

His landlady had used her discretion, and there was toast on the table. A beam of Spring's morning sunlight illuminated the toast-rack. He sat, and ate, and munched the doubt whether 'not *till*' included the final day, or stopped short of it. By this the state of his brain may be conceived. A longing for beauty, and a dark sense of an incapacity to thoroughly enjoy it, tormented him. He sent for his landlady's canary, and the ready shrill song of the bird persuaded him that much of the charm of music is wilfully swelled by ourselves, and can be by ourselves withdrawn: that is to say, the great charm and spell of sweet sounds is assisted by the force of our imaginations. What is that force?—the heat and torrent of the blood. When that exists no more—to one without hope, for instance—what is music or beauty? Intrinsically, they are next to nothing. He argued it out so, and convinced himself of his own delusions, till his hand, being in the sunlight, gave him a pleasant warmth. 'That 's something we all love,' he said, glancing at the blue sky above the roofs. 'But there 's little enough of it in this climate,' he thought, with an eye upon the darker corners of his room. When he had eaten, he sent word to his landlady to make up his week's bill. The week was not at an end, and that good woman appeared before him, astonished, saying: 'To be sure, your habits is regular, but there 's little items one can't guess at, and how make out a bill, Sir Purcy, and no items?'

He nodded his head.

'The country again?' she asked smilingly.

'I am going down there,' he said.

'And beautiful at this time of the year, it is! though, for market gardening, London beats any country I ever

knew ; and if you like creature comforts, I always say, stop in London ! And then the policemen ! who really are the greatest comfort of all to us poor women, and seem sent from above especially to protect our weakness. I do assure you, Sir Purcy, I feel it, and never knew a right-minded woman that did not. And how on earth our grandmothers contrived to get about without them ! But there ! people who lived before us do seem like the most *un*comfortable ! When—my goodness ! we come to think there was some lived before tea ! Why, as I say over almost every cup I drink, it ain't to be realized. It seems almost wicked to say it, Sir Purcy ; but it 's my opinion there ain't a Christian woman who 's not made more of a Christian through her tea. And a man who beats his wife—my first question is, " Do he take his tea regular ? " For, depend upon it, that man is not a tea-drinker at all.'

He let her talk away, feeling oddly pleased by this mundane chatter, as was she to pour forth her inmost sentiments to a baronet.

When she said : ' Your fire shall be lighted to-night to welcome you,' the man looked up, and was going to request that the trouble might be spared, but he nodded. His ghost saw the burning fire awaiting him. Or how if it sparkled merrily, and he beheld it with his human eyes that night ? His beloved would then have touched him with her hand—yea, brought the dead to life ! He jumped to his feet, and dismissed the worthy dame. On both sides of him, ' Yes,' and ' No,' seemed pressing like two hostile powers that battled for his body. They shrieked in his ears, plucked at his fingers. He heard them hushing deeply as he went to his pistol-case, and drew forth one—he knew not which.

CHAPTER LVI

AN ADVANCE AND A CHECK

On a wild April morning, Emilia rose from her bed and called to mind a day of the last year's Spring when she had watched the cloud streaming up, and felt that it was the curtain of an unknown glory. But now it wore the aspect of her life itself, with nothing hidden behind those stormy folds, save peace. South-westward she gazed, eyeing eagerly the struggle of twisting vapour; long flying edges of silver went by, and mounds of faint crimson, and here and there a closing space of blue, swift as a thought of home to a soldier in action. The heavens were like a battle-field. Emilia shut her lips hard, to check an impulse of prayer for Merthyr fighting in Italy: for he was in Italy, and she once more among the Monmouth hills: he was in Italy fighting, and she chained here to her miserable promise! Three days after she had given the promise to Wilfrid, Merthyr left, shaking her hand like any common friend. Georgiana remained, by his desire, to protect her. Emilia had written to Wilfrid for release, but being no apt letter-writer, and hating the task, she was soon involved by him in a complication of bewildering sentiments, some of which she supposed she was bound to feel, while perhaps one or two she did feel, at the summons. The effect was that she lost the true wording of her blunt petition for release: she could no longer put it bluntly. But her heart revolted the more, and gave her sharp eyes to see into his selfishness. The purgatory of her days with Georgiana, when the latter was kept back from her brother in his peril, spurred Emilia to renew

her appeal; but she found that all she said drew her into unexpected traps and pitfalls. There was only one thing she could say plainly: 'I want to go.' If she repeated this, Wilfrid was ready with citations from her letters, wherein she had said 'this,' and 'that,' and many other phrases. His epistolary power and skill in arguing his own case were creditable to him. Affected as Emilia was by other sensations, she could not combat the idea strenuously suggested by him, that he had reason to complain of her behaviour. He admitted his special faults, but, by distinctly tracing them to their origin, he complacently hinted the excuse for them. Moreover, and with artistic ability, he painted such a sentimental halo round the 'sacredness of her pledged word,' that Emilia could not resist a superstitious notion about it, and about what the breaking of it would imply. Georgiana had removed her down to Monmouth to be out of his way. A constant flight of letters pursued them both, for Wilfrid was far too clever to allow letters in his hand-writing to come for one alone of two women shut up in a country-house together. He saw how the letterless one would sit speculating shrewdly and spitefully; so he was careful to amuse his mystified Dragon, while he drew nearer and nearer to his gold apple. Another object was, that by getting Georgiana to consent to become in part his confidante, he made it almost a point of honour for her to be secret with Lady Charlotte.

At last a morning came with no Brookfield letter for either of them. The letters stopped from that time. It was almost as if a great buzzing had ceased in Emilia's ears, and she now heard her own sensations clearly. To Georgiana's surprise, she manifested no apprehension or regret. 'Or else,' the lady thought, 'she wears a mask to me'; and certainly it was a pale face that

Emilia was beginning to wear. At last came April and its wild morning. No little female hypocrisies passed between them when they met; they shook hands at arm's length by the breakfast-table. Then Emilia said: 'I am ready to go to Italy: I will go at once.'

Georgiana looked straight at her, thinking: 'This is a fit of indignation with Wilfrid.' She answered: 'Italy! I fancied you had forgotten there was such a country.'

'I don't forget my country and my friends,' said Emilia.

'At least, I must ask the ground of so unexpected a resolution,' was rejoined.

'Do you remember what Merthyr wrote in his letter from Arona? How long it takes to understand the meaning of some words! He says that I should not follow an impulse that is not the impulse of *all* my nature—myself altogether. Yes! I know what that means now. And he tells me that my life is worth more than to be bound to the pledge of a silly moment. It is! He, Georgey, unkind that you are!—he does not distrust me; but always advises and helps me: Merthyr *waits* for me. I cannot be instantly ready for every meaning in the world. What I want to do, is to see Wilfrid: if not, I will write to him. I will tell him that I intend to break my promise.'

A light of unaffected pride shone from the girl's face, as she threw down this gauntlet to sentimentalism.

'And if he objects?' said Georgiana.

'If he objects, what can happen? If he objects by letter, I am gone. I shall not write for permission. I shall write what my will is. If I see him, and he objects, I can look into his eyes and say what I think right. Why, I have lived like a frozen thing ever since I gave him my word. I have felt at times like a snake hissing

at my folly. I think I have felt something like men when they swear.'

Georgiana's features expressed a slight but perceptible disgust. Emilia continued humbly: 'Forgive me. I wish you to know how I hate the word I gave that separates me from Merthyr in my Italy, and makes you dislike your poor Emilia. You do. I have pardoned it, though it was twenty stabs a day.'

'But, why, if this promise was so hateful to you, did you not break it before?' asked Georgiana.

'I had not the courage,' Emilia stooped her head to confess; 'and besides,' she added, curiously half-closing her eyelids, as one does to look on a minute object, 'I could not see through it before.'

'If,' suggested Georgiana, 'you break your word, you release him from his.'

'No! if he cannot see the difference,' cried Emilia, wildly, 'then let him keep away from me for ever, and he shall not have the name of friend! Is there no difference—I wish you would let me cry out as they do in Shakespeare, Georgey!' Emilia laughed to cover her vehemence. 'I want something more than our way of talking, to witness that there is such a difference between us. Am I to live here till all my feelings are burnt out, and my very soul is only a spark in a log of old wood? and to keep him from murdering my countrymen, or flogging the women of Italy! God knows what those Austrians would make him do. He changes. He would easily become an Austrian. I have heard him once or twice, and if I had shut my eyes, I might have declared an Austrian spoke. I wanted to keep him here, but it is not right that I—I should be caged till I scarcely feel my finger-ends, or know that I breathe sensibly as you and others do. I am with Merthyr. That is what I intend to tell him.'

She smiled softly up to Georgiana's cold eyes, to get a look of forgiveness for her fiery speaking.

'So, then, you love my brother?' said Georgiana.

Emilia could have retorted, 'Cruel that you are!' The pain of having an unripe feeling plucked at without warning, was bitter; but she repressed any exclamation, in her desire to maintain simple and unsensational relations always with those surrounding her.

'He is my friend,' she said. 'I think of something better than that other word. Oh, that I were a man, to call him my brother-in-arms! What 's a girl's love in return for his giving his money, his heart, and offering his life every day for Italy?'

As soon as Georgiana could put faith in her intention to depart, she gave her a friendly hand and embrace.

Two days later they were at Richford, with Lady Gosstre. The journals were full of the Italian uprising. There had been a collision between the Imperial and patriotic forces, near Brescia, from which the former had retired in some confusion. Great things were expected of Piedmont, though many, who had reason to know him, distrusted her king. All Lombardy awaited the signal from Piedmont. Meanwhile blood was flowing.

In the excitement of her sudden rush from dead monotony to active life, Emilia let some time pass before she wrote to Wilfrid. Her letter was in her hand, when one was brought in to her from him. It ran thus:

'I have just returned home, and what is this I hear? Are you utterly faithless? Can I not rely on you to keep the word you have solemnly pledged! Meet me at once. Name a place. I am surrounded by misery and distraction. I will tell you all when we meet. I have trusted that you were firm. Write instantly. I cannot ask you to come here. The house is broken up. There is no putting to paper what has happened. My

father lies helpless. Everything rests on me. I thought that I could rely on you.'

Emilia tore up her first letter, and replied :

'Come here at once. Or, if you would wish to meet me elsewhere, it shall be where you please : but immediately. If you have heard that I am going to Italy, it is true. I break my promise. I shall hope to have your forgiveness. My heart bleeds for my dear Cornelia, and I am eager to see my sisters, and embrace them, and share their sorrow. If I must not come, tell them I kiss them. Adieu ! '

Wilfrid replied :

'I will be by Richford Park gates to-morrow at a quarter to nine. You speak of your heart. I suppose it is a habit. Be careful to put on a cloak or thick shawl ; we have touches of frost. If I cannot amuse you, perhaps the nightingales will. Do you remember those of last year ? I wonder whether we shall hear the same ?— we shall never hear the same.'

This iteration, whether cunningly devised or not, had a charm for Emilia's ear. She thought : 'I had forgotten all about them.' When she was in her bed-room at night, she threw up her window. April was leaning close upon May, and she had not to wait long before a dusky flutter of low notes, appearing to issue from the great rhododendron bank across the lawn, surprised her. She listened, and another little beginning was heard, timorous, shy, and full of mystery for her. The moon hung over branches, some that showed young buds, some still bare. Presently the long, rich, single notes cut the air, and melted to their glad delicious chuckle. The singer was answered from a farther bough, and again from one. It grew to be a circle of melody round Emilia at the open window. Was it the same as last year's ? The last year's lay in her memory faint and well-nigh

unawakened. There was likewise a momentary sense of unreality in this still piping peacefulness, while Merthyr stood in a bloody-streaked field, fronting death. And yet the song was sweet. Emilia clasped her arms, shut her eyes, and drank it in. Not to think at all, or even to brood on her sensations, but to rest half animate and let those divine sounds find a way through her blood, was medicine to her.

Next day there were numerous visits to the house. Emilia was reserved, and might have been thought sad, but she welcomed Tracy Runningbrook gladly, with 'Oh! my old friend!' and a tender squeeze of his hand.

'True, if you like; hot, if you like; but "old?"' cried Tracy.

'Yes, because I seem to have got to the other side of you; I mean, I know you, and am always sure of you,' said Emilia. 'You don't care for music; I don't care for poetry, but we 're friends, and I am quite certain of you, and think you "old friend" always.'

'And I,' said Tracy, better up to the mark by this time, 'I think of you, you dear little woman, that I ought to be grateful to you, for, by heaven! you give me, every time I see you, the greatest temptation to be a fool and let me prove that I 'm not. Altro! altro!'

'A fool!' said Emilia caressingly; showing that his smart insinuation had slipped by her.

The tale of Brookfield was told over again by Tracy, and Emilia shuddered, though Merthyr and her country held her heart and imagination active and in suspense, from moment to moment. It helped mainly to discolour the young world to her eyes. She was under the spell of an excitement too keen and quick to be subdued by the sombre terrors of a tragedy enacted in a house that she had known. Brookfield was in the talk of all who came to Richford. Emilia got the vision of the wretched

family seated in the library as usual, when upon midnight they were about to part, and a knock came at the outer door, and two men entered the hall, bearing a lifeless body with a red spot above the heart. She saw Cornelia fall to it. She saw the pale-faced family that had given her shelter, and moaned for lack of a way of helping them and comforting them. She reproached herself for feeling her own full physical life so warmly, while others whom she had loved were weeping. It was useless to resist the tide of fresh vitality in her veins, and when her thoughts turned to their main attraction, she was rejoicing at the great strength she felt coming to her gradually. Her face was smooth and impassive: this new joy of strength came on her like the flowing of a sea to a land-locked water. 'Poor souls!' she sighed for her friends, while irrepressible exultation filled her spirit.

That afternoon, in the midst of packing and preparations for the journey, at all of which Lady Gosstre smiled with a complacent bewilderment, a card, bearing the name of Miss Laura Tinley, was sent up to Emilia. She had forgotten this person, and asked Lady Gosstre who it was. Arabella's rival presented herself most winningly. For some time, Emilia listened to her, with wonder that a tongue should be so glib on matters of no earthly interest. At last, Laura said in an undertone: 'I am the bearer of a message from Mr. Pericles; do you walk at all in the garden?'

Emilia read her look, and rose. Her thoughts struck back on the creature that she was when she had last seen Mr. Pericles, and again, by contrast, on what she was now. Eager to hear of him, or rather to divine the mystery in her bosom aroused by the unexpected mention of his name, she was soon alone with Laura in the garden.

'Oh, those poor Poles!' Laura began.

'You were going to say something of Mr. Pericles,' said Emilia.

'Yes, indeed, my dear; but, of course, you have heard all the details of that dreadful night? It cannot be called a comfort to us that it enables my brother Albert to come forward in the most disinterested—I might venture to say, generous—manner, and prove the chivalry of his soul; still, as things are, we are glad, after such misunderstandings, to prove to that sorely-tried family who are their friends. I—you would little think so from their treatment of me—I was at school with them. I knew them before they became unintelligible, though they always had a turn for it. To dress well, to be refined, to marry well—I understand all that perfectly; but who *could* understand *them*? Not they themselves, I am certain! And now penniless! and not only that, but lawyers! You know that Mrs. Chump has commenced an action?—no? Oh, yes, but I shall have to tell you the whole story.'

'What is it?—they want money?' said Emilia.

'I will tell you. Our poor gentlemanly organist, whom you knew, was really a baronet's son, and inherited the title.'

Emilia interrupted her: 'Oh, do let me hear about them!'

'Well, my dear, this unfortunate—I may call him "lover," for if a man does not stamp the truth of his affection with a pistol, what other means has he? And just a word as to romance. I have been sighing for it—no one would think so—all my life. And who would have thought that these poor Poles should have lived to convince me of the folly! Oh, delicious humdrum!—there is nothing like it. But you are anxious, naturally. Poor Sir Purcell Barrett—he may or may not have been mad, but when he was brought to the house at Brook-

field—quite by chance—I mean, his body—two labouring men found him by a tree—I don't know whether you remembered a pollard-willow that stood all white and rotten by the water in the fir-wood :—well, as I said, mad or not, no sooner did poor Cornelia see him than she shrieked that she was the cause of his death. He was laid in the hall—which I have so often trod ! and there Cornelia sat by his poor dead body, and accused Wilfrid and her father of every unkindness. They say that the scene was terrible. Wilfrid—but I need not tell you his character. He flutters from flower to flower, but he has feeling. Now comes the worst of all —in one sense ; that is, looking on it as people of the world ; and being *in* the world, we must take a worldly view occasionally. Mr. Pole—you remember how he behaved once at Besworth : or, no ; you were not there, but he used your name. His *mania* was, as everybody could see, to marry his children grandly. I don't blame him in any way. Still, he was not justified in living beyond his means to that end, speculating rashly, and concealing his actual circumstances. Well, Mr. Pericles and he were involved together ; that is, Mr. Pericles——'

'Is Mr. Pericles near us now ? ' said Emilia quickly.

'We will come to him,' Laura resumed, with the complacency of one who saw a goodly portion of the festival she was enjoying still before her. 'I was going to say, Mr. Pericles had poor Mr. Pole in his power ; *has* him, would be the correcter tense. And Wilfrid, as you may have heard, had really grossly insulted him, even to the extent of maltreating him—a poor foreigner—rich foreigner, if you like ! but not capable of standing against a strong young man in wrath. However, now there can be little doubt that Wilfrid repents. He had been trying ever since to see Mr. Pericles ; and the very morning of that day, I believe, he saw him and humbled

himself to make an apology. This had put Mr. Pole in good spirits, and in the evening—he and Mrs. Chump were very fond of their wine after dinner—he was heard that very evening to name a day for his union with her ; for that had been quite understood, and he had asked his daughters and got their consent. The sight of Sir Purcell's corpse, and the cries of Cornelia, must have turned him childish. I cannot conceive a situation so harrowing as that of those poor children hearing their father declare himself an impostor ! a beggar ! a peculator ! He cried, poor unhappy man ! real tears ! The truth was that his nerves suddenly gave way. For, just before—only just before, he was smiling and talking largely. He wished to go on his knees to every one of them, and kept telling them of his love—the servants all awake and listening ! and more gossiping servants than the Poles always, by the most extraordinary inadvertence, managed to get, you never heard of ! Nothing would stop him from humiliating himself ! No one paid any attention to Mrs. Chump until she started from her chair. They say that some of the servants who were crying outside, positively were compelled to laugh when they heard her first outbursts. And poor Mr. Pole confessed that he had touched her money. He could not tell her how much. Fancy such a scene, with a dead man in the house ! Imagination almost refuses to conjure it up ! Not to dwell on it too long—for, *I* have never endured such a shock as it has given me—Mrs. Chump left the house, and the next thing received from her was a lawyer's letter. Business men say she is not to blame : women may cherish their own opinion. But, oh, Miss Belloni ! is it not terrible ? You are pale.'

Emilia, behind what she felt for her friends, had a dim comprehension of the meaning of their old disgust at Laura, during this narration. But, hearing the word

of pity, she did not stop to be critical. 'Can you do nothing for them ? ' she said abruptly.

The thought in Laura's shocked grey eyes was, 'They have done little enough for you,' *i.e.*, toward making you a lady. 'Oh ! ' she cried, 'can you teach me what to do ? I must be extremely delicate, and calculate upon what they would accept from *me*. For—so I hear—they used to—and may still—nourish a—what I called—silly—though not in unkindness—hostility to our family—me. And perhaps now natural delicacy may render it difficult for them to . . .'

In short, to accept an alms from Laura Tinley ; so said her pleading look for an interpretation.

'You know Mr. Pericles,' said Emilia, 'he can do the mischief—can he not ? Stop him.'

Laura laughed. 'One might almost say that you do *not* know him, Miss Belloni. What is my influence ? I have neither a voice, nor can I play on any instrument. I would—indeed I will—do my best—my utmost ; only, how even to introduce the subject to him ? Are not you the person ? He speaks of you constantly. He has consulted doctors with regard to your voice, and the only excuse, dear Miss Belloni, for my visit to you to-day, is my desire that any misunderstanding between you may be cleared. Because, I have just heard—Miss Belloni will forgive me !—the origin of it ; and tidings coming that you were in the neighbourhood, I thought—hoped that I might be the means of re-uniting two evidently destined to be of essential service to one another. And really, life means that, does it not ? '

Emilia was becoming more critical of this tone the more she listened. She declared her immediate willingness to meet Mr. Pericles. With which, and Emilia's assurance that she would write, and herself make the appointment, Laura retired, in high glee at the prospect of winning the

gratitude of the inscrutable millionaire. It was true that the absence of any rivalry for the possession of the man took much of his sweetness from him. She seemed to be plucking him from the hands of the dead, and half recognized that victory over uncontesting rivals claps the laurel-wreath rather rudely upon our heads.

Emilia lost no time in running straight to Georgiana, who was busy at her writing-desk. She related what she had just heard, ending breathlessly: 'Georgey! my dear! will you help them?'

'In what possible way can I do so?' said Georgiana. 'To-morrow night we shall have left England.'

'But to-day we are here.' Emilia pressed a hand to her bosom: 'my heart feels hollow, and my friends cry out in it. I cannot let him suffer.' She looked into Georgiana's eyes. 'Will you not help them?—they want money.'

The lady reddened. 'Is it not preposterous to suppose that I can offer them assistance of such a kind?'

'Not you,' returned Emilia, sighing; and in an under-breath, 'me—will you lend it to me? Merthyr would. I shall repay it. I cannot tell what fills me with this delight, but I know I am able to repay any sum. Two thousand pounds would help them. I think —I think my voice has come back.'

'Have you tried it?' said Georgiana, to produce a diversion from the other topic.

'No; but believe me when I tell you, it must be. I scarcely feel the floor; no misery touches me. I am only sorry for my friends, not down on the ground with them. Believe me! And I have been studying all this while. I have not lost an hour. I would accept a part, and step on the boards within a week, and be certain to succeed. I am just as willing to go to the Conservatorio and submit to discipline. Only, dear friend, believe me,

that I ask for money now, because I am sure I can repay it. I want to send it immediately, and then, good-bye to England.'

Georgiana closed her desk. She had been suspicious at first of another sentiment in the background, but was now quite convinced of the simplicity of Emilia's design. She said: 'I will tell you exactly how I am placed. I do not know, that under any circumstances, I could have given into your hands so large a sum as this that you ask for. My brother has a fortune; and I have also a little property. When I say my brother has a fortune, he has the remains of one. All that has gone has been devoted to relieve your countrymen, and further the interests he has nearest at heart. What is left to him, I believe, he has now thrown into the gulf. You have heard Lady Charlotte call him a fanatic.'

Emilia's lip quivered.

'You must not blame her for that,' Georgiana continued. 'Lady Gosstre thinks much the same. The world thinks with them. I love him, and prove my love by trusting him, and wish to prove my love by aiding him, and being always at hand to succour, as I should be now, but that I obeyed his dearest wish in resting here to watch over you. I am his other self. I have taught him to feel that, so that in his devotion to this cause he may follow every impulse he has, and still there is his sister to fall back on. My child! see what I have been doing. I have been calculating here.' Georgiana took a scroll from her desk, and laid it under Emilia's eyes. I have reckoned our expenses as far as Turin, and have only consented to take Lady Gosstre's valet for courier, just to please her. I know that he will make the cost double, and I feel like a miser about money. If Merthyr is ruined, he will require every farthing that I have for our common subsistence. Now do you under-

stand ? I can hardly put the case more plainly. It is out of my power to do what you ask me to do.'

Emilia sighed lightly, and seemed not much cast down by the refusal. She perceived that it was necessarily positive, and like all minds framed to resolve to action, there was an instantaneous change of the current of her thoughts in another direction.

'Then, my darling, my one prayer!' she said. 'Postpone our going for a week. I will try to get help for them elsewhere.'

Georgiana was pleased by Emilia's manner of taking the rebuff; but it required an altercation before she consented to this postponement; she nodded her head finally in anger.

CHAPTER LVII

CONTAINS A FURTHER ANATOMY OF WILFRID

By the park-gates that evening, Wilfrid received a letter from the hands of Tracy Runningbrook. It said: 'I am not able to see you now. When I tell you that I will see you before I leave England, I insist upon your believing me. I have no head for seeing anybody now. Emilia'—was the simple signature, perused over and over again by this maddened lover, under the flitting gate-lamp, after Tracy had left him. The coldness of Emilia's name so briefly given, concentrated every fire in his heart. What was it but miserable cowardice, he thought, that prevented him from getting the peace poor Barrett had found? Intolerable anguish weakened his limbs. He flung himself on a wayside bank, grovelling, to rise again calm and quite ready for society, upon the

proper application of the clothes-brush. Indeed, he patted his shoulder and elbow to remove the soil of his short contact with earth, and tried a cigar : but the first taste of the smoke sickened his lips. Then he stood for a moment as a man in a new world. This strange sensation of disgust with familiar comforting habits, fixed him in perplexity, till a rushing of wild thoughts and hopes from brain to heart, heart to brain, gave him insight, and he perceived his state, and that for all he held to in our life he was dependent upon another ; which is virtually the curse of love.

'And he passed along the road,' adds the Philosopher, 'a weaker man, a stronger lover. Not that love should diminish manliness or gains by so doing ; but travelling to love by the ways of Sentiment, attaining to the passion bit by bit, does full surely take from us the strength of our nature, as if (which is probable) at every step we paid fee to move forward. Wilfrid had just enough of the coin to pay his footing. He was verily *fining himself down*. You are tempted to ask what the value of him will be by the time that he turns out pure metal ? I reply, something considerable, if by great sacrifice he gets to truth—gets to that oneness of feeling which is the truthful impulse. At last, he will stand high above them that have not suffered. The rejection of his cigar——'

This waxes too absurd. At the risk of breaking our partnership for ever, I intervene. My Philosopher's meaning is plain, and, as usual, good ; but not even I, who have less reason to laugh at him than anybody, can gravely accept the juxtaposition of suffering and cigars. And, moreover, there is a little piece of action in store.

Wilfrid had walked half way to Brookfield, when the longing to look upon the Richford chamber-windows stirred so hotly within him that he returned to the gates. He saw Captain Gambier issuing on horseback from under

the lamp. The captain remarked that it was a fine night, and prepared to ride off, but Wilfrid requested him to dismount, and his voice had the unmistakeable ring in it by which a man knows that there must be no trifling. The captain leaned forward to look at him before he obeyed the summons. All self-control had abandoned Wilfrid in the rage he felt at Gambier's having seen Emilia, and the jealous suspicion that she had failed to keep her appointment for the like reason.

'Why do you come here?' he said hoarsely.

'By Jove! that 's an odd question,' said the captain, at once taking his ground.

'Am I to understand that you 've been playing with my sister, as you do with every other woman?'

Captain Gambier murmured quietly, 'Every other woman?' and smoothed his horse's neck. 'They 're not so easily played with, my dear fellow. You speak like a youngster.'

'I am the only protector of my sister's reputation,' said Wilfrid, 'and, by heaven! if you have cast her over to be the common talk, you shall meet me.'

The captain turned to his horse, saying, 'Oh! Well!' Being mounted, he observed: 'My dear Pole, you might have sung out all you had to say. Go to your sister, and if she complains of my behaviour, I 'll meet you. Oh, yes! I 'll meet you; I have no objection to excitement. You 're in the hands of an infernally clever woman, who does me the honour to wish to see my blood on the carpet, I believe; but if this is her scheme, it 's not worthy of her ability. She began pretty well. She arranged the preliminaries capitally. Why, look here,' he relinquished his ordinary drawl; 'I 'll tell you something, which you may put down in my favour or not—just as you like. That woman did her best to compromise your sister with me on board the yacht. I can't

tell you how, and won't. Of course, I wouldn't if I could ; but I have sense enough to admire a very charming person, and I did the only honourable thing in my power. It 's your sister, my good fellow, who gave me my dismissal. We had a little common sense conversation—in which she shines. I envy the man that marries her, but she denies me such luck. There ! if you want to shoot me for my share in that transaction, I 'll give you your chance : and if you do, my dear Pole, either you must be a tremendous fool, or that woman 's ten times cleverer than I thought. You know where to find me. Good night.'

The captain gave heel to his horse, hearing no more.

Adela confirmed to Wilfrid what Gambier had spoken ; and that it was she who had given him his dismissal. She called him by his name, 'Augustus,' in a kindly tone, remarking, that Lady Charlotte had persecuted him dreadfully. 'Poor Augustus ! his *entire* reputation for evil is owing to her black paint-brush. There is no man so easily "hooked," as Mrs. Bayruffle would say, as he, though he has but eight hundred a-year : barely enough to live on. It would have been cruel of me to keep him, for if he is in love, it 's with Emilia.'

Wilfrid here took upon himself to reproach her for a certain negligence of worldly interests. She laughed and blushed with humorous satisfaction ; and, on second thoughts, he changed his opinion, telling her that he wished he could win his freedom as she had done.

'Wilfrid,' she said suddenly, 'will you persuade Cornelia not to wear *black* ? '

'Yes, if you wish it,' he replied.

'You will, positively ? Then listen, dear. I don't like the prospect of your alliance with Lady Charlotte.'

Wilfrid could not repress a despondent shrug.

'But you can get released,' she cried; and ultimately counselled him: 'Mention the name of Lord Eltham before her once, when you are alone. Watch the result. Only, don't be clumsy. But I need not tell you *that*.'

For hours he cudgelled his brains to know why she desired Cornelia not to wear black, and when the light broke in on him he laughed like a jolly youth for an instant. The reason why was in a web so complicated, that, to have divined what hung on Cornelia's wearing of black, showed a rare sagacity and perception of character on the little lady's part. As thus:—Sir Twickenham Pryme is the most sensitive of men to ridicule and vulgar tattle: he has continued to visit the house, learning by degrees to prefer *me*, but still too chivalrous to withdraw his claim to *Cornelia*, notwithstanding that he has seen indications of her not too absolute devotion towards *him*:—I have let him become aware that I have broken with Captain Gambier (whose income is eight hundred a year merely), for the sake of a higher attachment:—now, since the catastrophe, he can with ease make it appear to the world that *I* was his choice from the first, seeing that Cornelia will assuredly make no manner of objection:—but, if she, with foolish sentimental persistence, assumes the garb of sorrow, then Sir Twickenham's ears will tingle; he will retire altogether; he will not *dare* to place himself in a position which will lend a colour to the gossip, that jilted by one sister, he flew for consolation to the other; jilted, too, for the mere memory of a dead man! an additional insult!

Exquisite intricacy! Wilfrid worked through all the intervolutions, and nearly forgot his wretchedness in admiration of his sister's mental endowments. He was the more willing to magnify them, inasmuch as he thereby strengthened his hope that liberty would follow the

speaking of the talismanic name of Eltham to Lady Charlotte, alone. He had come to look upon her as the real barrier between himself and Emilia.

'I think we have brains,' he said softly, on his pillow, upon a review of the beggared aspect of his family; and he went to sleep with a smile on his face.

CHAPTER LVIII

FROST ON THE MAY NIGHT

A SHARP breath of air had passed along the dews, and all the young green of the fresh season shone in white jewels. The sky, set with very dim distant stars, was in grey light round a small brilliant moon. Every space of earth lifted clear to her; the woodland listened; and in the bright silence the nightingales sang loud.

Emilia and Tracy Runningbrook were threading their way toward a lane over which great oak branches intervolved; thence under larches all with glittering sleeves, and among spiky brambles, with the purple leaf and the crimson frosted. The frost on the edges of the brown-leaved bracken gave a faint colour. Here and there, intense silver dazzled their eyes. As they advanced amid the icy hush, so hard and instant was the ring of the earth under them, their steps sounded as if expected.

'This night seems made for me!' said Emilia.

Tracy had no knowledge of the object of the expedition. He was her squire simply; had pitched on a sudden into an enamoured condition, and walked beside her, caring little whither he was led, so that she left him not.

They came upon a clearing in the wood where a tournament of knights might have been held. Ranged on two

sides were rows of larches, and forward, fit to plume a daïs, a clump of tall firs stood with a flowing silver fir to right and left, and the white stems of the birch-tree shining from among them. This fair woodland court had three broad oaks, as for gateways ; and the moon was above it. Moss and the frosted brown fern were its flooring.

Emilia said eagerly, ' This way,' and ran under one of the oaks. She turned to Tracy following : ' There is no doubt of it.' Her hand was lying softly on her throat.

' Your voice ? ' Tracy divined her.

She nodded, but frowned lovingly at the shout he raised, and he understood that there was haply some plot to be worked out. The open space was quite luminous in the middle of those three deep walls of shadow. Emilia enjoined him to rest where he was, and wait for her on that spot like a faithful sentinel, whatsoever ensued. Coaxing his promise, she entered the square of white light alone. Presently she stood upon a low mound, so that her whole figure was distinct, while the moon made her features visible.

Expectancy sharpened the stillness to Tracy's ears. A nightingale began the charm. He was answered by another. Many were soon in song, till even the pauses were sweet with them. Tracy had the thought that they were calling for Emilia to commence ; that it was nature preluding the divine human voice, weaving her spell for it. He was seized by a thirst to hear the adorable girl, who stood there patiently, with her face lifted soft in moonlight. And then the blood thrilled along his veins, as if one more than mortal had touched him. It seemed to him long before he knew that Emilia's voice was in the air.

In such a place, at such a time, there is no wizardry like a woman's voice. Emilia had gained in force and

fulness. She sang with a stately fervour, letting the notes flow from her breast, while both her arms hung loose, and not a gesture escaped her. Tracy's fiery imagination set him throbbing, as to the voice of the verified spirit of the place. He heard nothing but Emilia, and scarce felt that it was she, or that tears were on his eyelids, till her voice sank richly, deep into the bosom of the woods. Then the stillness, like one folding up a precious jewel, seemed to pant audibly.

'She 's not alone!' This was human speech at his elbow, uttered in some stupefied amazement. In an extremity of wrath, Tracy turned about to curse the intruder, and discerned Wilfrid, eagerly bent forward on the other side of the oak by which he leaned. Advancing toward Emilia, two figures were seen. Mr. Pericles in his bearskin was easily to be distinguished. His companion was Laura Tinley. The Greek moved at rapid strides, and coming near upon Emilia, raised his hands as in exclamation. At once he disencumbered his shoulders of the enormous wrapper, held it aloft imperiously, and by main force extinguished Emilia. Laura's shrill laugh resounded.

'Oh! beastly bathos!' Tracy groaned in his heart. 'Here we are down in Avernus in a twinkling!'

There was evidently quick talk going on among the three, after which Emilia, heavily weighted, walked a little apart with Mr. Pericles, who looked lean and lank beside her, and gesticulated in his wildest manner. Tracy glanced about for Wilfrid. The latter was not visible, but, stepping up the bank of sand and moss, appeared a lady in shawl and hat, in whom he recognized Lady Charlotte. He went up to her and saluted.

'Ah! Tracy,' she said. 'I saw you leave the drawing-room, and expected to find you here. So, the little woman has got her voice again; but why on earth

couldn't she make the display at Richford? It 's very pretty, and I dare say you highly approve of this kind of romantic interlude, Signor Poet, but it strikes me as being rather senseless.'

'But, are you alone? What on earth brings you here?' asked Tracy.

'Oh!' the lady shrugged. 'I 've a guard to the rear. I told her I would come. She said I should hear something to-night, if I did. I fancied naturally the appointment had to do with her voice, and wished to please her. It 's only five minutes from the west-postern of the park. Is she going to sing any more? There 's company apparently. Shall we go and declare ourselves?'

'I 'm on duty, and can't,' replied Tracy, and twisting his body in an ecstasy, added: 'Did you hear her?'

Lady Charlotte laughed softly. 'You speak as if you had taken a hurt, my dear boy. This sort of scene is dangerous to poets. But, I thought you slighted music.'

'I don't know whether I 'm breathing yet,' Tracy rejoined. 'She 's a Goddess to me from this moment. Not like music? Am I a dolt? She would raise me from the dead, if she sang over me. Put me in a boat, and let her sing on, and all may end! I could die into colour, hearing her! That 's the voice they hear in heaven.'

'When they are good, I suppose,' the irreverent lady appended. 'What 's that?' And she held her head to listen.

Emilia's mortal tones were calling Wilfrid's name. The lady became grave, as with keen eyes she watched the open space, and to a second call Wilfrid presented himself in a leisurely way from under cover of the trees; stepping into the square towards the three, as one equal

to all occasions, and specially prepared for this. He was observed to bow to Mr. Pericles, and the two men extended hands, Laura Tinley standing decently away from them.

Lady Charlotte could not contain her mystification. 'What does it mean?' she said. 'Wilfrid was to be in town at the Ambassador's to-night! He wrote to me at five o'clock from his Club! Is he insane? Has he lost every sense of self-interest? He can't have made up his mind to miss his opportunity, when all the introductions are there! Run, like a good creature, Tracy, and see if that is Wilfrid, and come back and tell me; but don't say I am here.'

'Desert my post?' Tracy hugged his arms tight together. 'Not if I freeze here!'

The doubt in Lady Charlotte's eyes was transient. She dropped her glass. Visible adieux were being waved between Mr. Pericles and Laura Tinley on the one hand, and Wilfrid and Emilia, on the other. After which, and at a quick pace, manifestly shivering, Mr. Pericles drew Laura into the shadows, and Emilia, clad in the immense bearskin, as with a trailing black barbaric robe, walked toward the oaks. Wilfrid's head was stooped to a level with Emilia's, into whose face he was looking obliviously, while the hot words sprang from his lips. They neared the oak, and Emilia slanted her direction, so as to avoid the neighbourhood of the tree. Tracy felt a sudden grasp of his arm. It was momentary, coming simultaneously with a burst of Wilfrid's voice.

'Do I know what I love, you ask? I love your footprints! Everything you have touched is like fire to me. Emilia! Emilia!'

'Then,' came the clear reply, 'you do not love Lady Charlotte?'

'Love her!' he shouted scornfully, and subdued his

voice to add: 'She has a good heart, and whatever scandal is talked of her and Lord Eltham, she is a well-meaning friend. But, love her! You, you I love!'

'Theatrical business!' Lady Charlotte murmured, and imagined she had expected it when she promised Emilia she would step out into the night air, as possibly she had.

The lady walked straight up to them.

'Well, little one!' she addressed Emilia; 'I am glad you have recovered your voice. You play the game of tit-for-tat remarkably well. We will now sheath our battledores. There is my hand.'

The unconquerable aplomb in Lady Charlotte, which Wilfrid always artistically admired, and which always mastered him; the sight of her pale face and courageous eyes; and her choice of the moment to come forward and declare her presence;—all fell upon the furnace of Wilfrid's heart like a quenching flood. In a stupefaction, he confessed to himself that he could say actually nothing. He could hardly look up.

Emilia turned her eyes from the outstretched hand, to the lady's face.

'What will it mean?' she said.

'That we are quits, I presume; and that we bear no malice. At any rate, that I relinquish the field. I like a hand that can deal a good stroke. I conceived you to be a mere little romantic person, and correct my mistake. You win the prize, you see.'

'You would have made him an Austrian, and he is now safe from that. I win nothing more,' said Emilia.

When Tracy and Emilia stood alone, he cried out in a rapture of praise, 'Now I know what a power you have. You may bid me live or die.'

The recent scene concerned chiefly the actors who had

moved onward : it had touched Emilia but lightly, and him not at all. But, while he magnified the glory of her singing, the imperishable note she had sounded this night, and the power and the triumph that would be hers, Emilia's bosom began to heave, and she checked him with a storm of tears. 'Triumph ! yes ! what is this I have done ? Oh, Merthyr, my true hero ! He praises me and knows nothing of how false I have been to you. I am a slave ! I have sold myself—sold myself ! ' She dropped her face in her hands, broken with grief. 'He fights,' she pursued ; 'he fights for my country. I feel his blood—it seems to run from my body as it runs from his. Not if he is dying—I dare not go to him if he is dying ! I am in chains. I have sworn it for money. See what a different man Merthyr is from any on earth ! Would he shoot himself for a woman ? Would he grow meaner the more he loved her ? My hero ! my hero ! and Tracy, my friend ! what is my grief now ? Merthyr is my hero, but I hear him—I hear him speaking it into my ears with his own lips, that I do not love him. And it is true. I never should have sold myself for three weary years away from him, if I had loved him. I know it now it is done. I thought more of my poor friends and Wilfrid, than of Merthyr, who bleeds for my country ! And he will not spurn me when we meet. Yes, if he lives, he will come to me gentle as a ghost that has seen God ! '

She abandoned herself to weeping. Tracy, in a tender reverence for one who could speak such solemn matter spontaneously, supported her, and felt her tears as a rain of flame on his heart.

The nightingales were mute. Not a sound was heard from bough or brake.

CHAPTER LIX

EMILIA'S GOOD-BYE

A WRECK from the last Lombard revolt landed upon our shores in June. His right arm was in a sling, and his Italian servant following him, kept close by his side, with a ready hand, as if fearing that at any moment the wounded gentleman's steps might fail. There was no public war going on just then : for which reason he was eyed suspiciously by the rest of the passengers making their way up the beach ; who seemed to entertain an impression that he had no business at such a moment to be crippled, and might be put down as one of those foreign fools who stand out for a trifle as targets to fools a little luckier than themselves. Here, within our salt girdle, flourishes common sense. We cherish life ; we abhor bloodshed ; we have no sympathy with your juvenile points of honour : we are, in short, a civilized people ; and seeing that Success has made us what we are, we advise other nations to succeed, or be quiet. Of all of which the gravely-smiling gentleman appeared well aware ; for, with an eye that courted none, and a perfectly calm face, he passed through the crowd, only once availing himself of his brown-faced Beppo's spontaneously depressed shoulder when a twinge of pain shooting from his torn foot took his strength away. While he remained in sight, some speculation as to his nationality continued : he had been heard to speak nothing but Italian, and yet the flower of English cultivation was signally manifest in his style and bearing. The purchase of that day's journal, giving information that the Lombard revolt was fully, it was thought finally, crushed out, and the insurgents

scattered, hanged, or shot, suggested to a young lady in a group melancholy with luggage, that the wounded gentleman was one who had escaped from the Austrians.

'Only, he is English.'

'If he is, he deserves what he 's got.'

A stout Briton delivered this sentence, and gave in addition a sermon on meddling, short, emphatic, and not uncheerful apparently, if estimated by the hearty laugh that closed it; though a lady remarked, 'Oh, dear me! You are very sweeping.'

'By George! ma'am,' cried the Briton, holding out his newspaper, 'here 's a leader on the identical subject, with all my views in it! Yes! those Italians *are* absurd: they never *were* a people: never agreed. Egad! the only place they 're fit for is the stage. Art! if you like. They know all about colouring canvas, and sculpturing. I don't deny 'em their merits, and I don't mind listening to their squalling, now and then: though, I 'll tell you what:—have you ever noticed the calves of those singers? —I mean, the men. Perhaps not—for they 've got none. They 're sticks, not legs. Who *can* think much of fellows with such legs? Now, the next time you go to the Italian Opera, notice 'em. Ha! ha!—well, that would sound queer, told at second-hand; but, just look at their legs, ma'am, and ask yourself whether there 's much chance for a country that stands on legs like those! Let them paint, and carve blocks, and sing. They 're not fit for much else, as far as I can see.'

Thus, in the pride of his manliness, the male Briton. A shrill cry drew the attention of this group once more to the person who had just kindly furnished a topic. He had been met on his way by a lady unmistakeably foreign in her appearance. 'Marini!' was the word of the cry; and the lady stood with her head bent and her hands stiffened rigidly.

'Lost her husband, I dare say!' the Briton murmured. 'Perhaps he 's one of the "hanged, or shot," in the list here. Hanged! shot! Ask those Austrians to be merciful, and that 's their reply. Why, good God! it 's like the grunt of a savage beast! Hanged! shot!—count how many for one day's work! Ten at Verona; fifteen at Mantua; five—there, stop! If we enter into another alliance with those infernal ruffians!—if they 're not branded in the face of Europe as inhuman butchers! if I—by George! if I were an Italian I 'd handle a musket myself, and think great guns the finest music going. Mind, if there 's a subscription for the widows of these poor fellows, I put down my name; so shall my wife, so shall my daughters, so we will all, down to the baby!'

Merthyr's name was shouted first on his return to England by Mrs. Chump. He was waiting on the platform of the London station for the train to take him to Richford, when, 'Oh! Mr. Pow's, Mr. Pow's!' resounded, and Mrs. Chump fluttered before him. She was on her way to Brookfield, she said; and it was, she added, her firm belief that heaven had sent him to her aid, not deeming 'that poor creature, Mr. Braintop, there, sufficient for the purpose. For what I 've got to go through, among them at Brookfield, Mr. Pow's, it 's perf'ctly awful. Mr. Braintop,' she turned to the youth, 'you may go now. And don't go takin' ship and sailin' for Italy after the little Belloni, for ye haven't a chance—poor fella! though he combs 's hair so careful, Mr. Pow's, and ye might almost laugh and cry together to see how humble he is, and audacious too—all in a lump. For, when little Belloni was in the ship, ye know, and she thinkin', "not one of my friends near to wave a handkerchief!" behold, there 's that boy Braintop just as by maguc, and he wavin' his best, which is a cambric,

and a present from myself, and precious wet that night, ye might swear; for the quiet lovers, Mr. Pow's, they cry, they do, buckutsful!'

'And is Miss Belloni gone?' said Merthyr, looking steadily for answer.

'To be sure, sir, she has; but have ye got a squeak of pain? Oh, dear! it makes my blood creep to see a man who 's been where there 's been firing of shots in a temper. Ye 're vary pale, sir.'

'She went—on what day?' asked Merthyr.

'Oh! I can't poss'bly tell ye that, Mr. Pow's, havin' affairs of my own most urrgent. But, Mr. Paricles has got her at last. That 's certain. Gall'ns of tears has poor Mr. Braintop cried over it, bein' one of the mew-in-a-corner sort of young men, ye know, what never win the garl, but cry enough to float her and the lucky fella too, and off they go, and he left on the shore.'

Merthyr looked impatiently out of the window. His wounds throbbed and his forehead was moist.

'With Mr. Pericles?' he queried, while Mrs. Chump was giving him the reasons for the immediate visit to Brookfield.

'They 're cap'tal friends again, ye know, Mr. Pow's, Mr. Paricles and Pole; and Pole 's quite set up, and yesterday mornin' sends me two thousand pounds—not a penny less! and ye 'll believe me, I was in a stiff gape for five minutes when Mr. Braintop shows the money. What a temptation for the young man! But Pole didn't know his love for little Belloni.'

'Has she no one with her?' Merthyr seized the opportunity of her name being pronounced to get clear tidings of her, if possible.

'Oh, dear, yes, Mr. Paricles is with her,' returned Mrs. Chump. 'And, as I was sayin', sir, two thousand pounds! I ran off to my lawyer; for, it 'll seem odd

to ye, now, Mr. Pow's, that know my 'ffection for the Poles, poor dears, I 'd an action against 'em. "Stop ut," I cries out to the man :—if he 'd been one o' them that wears a wig, I couldn't ha' spoken so—"Stop ut," I cries, not a bit afraid of 'm. I wouldn't let the man go on, for all I want to know is, that I 'm not rrooned. And now I 've got money, I must have friends ; for when I hadn't, ye know, my friends seemed against me, and now I have, it 's the world that does,—where 'll I hide it ? Oh, dear ! now I 'm with you, I don't mind, though this brown-faced forr'ner servant of yours, he gives me shivers. Can he understand English ?—becas I 've got ut all in my pockut ! '

Merthyr sighed wearily for release. At last the train slackened speed, and the well-known fir-country appeared in sight. Mrs. Chump caught him by the arm as he prepared to alight. ' Oh ! and are ye goin' to let me face the Poles without any one to lean on in that awful moment, and no one to bear witness how kind I 've spoken of 'em. Mr. Pow's ! will ye prove that you 're a blessed angel, sir, and come, just for five minutes—which is a short time to do a thing for a woman she 'll never forget.'

' Pray spare me, madam,' Merthyr pleaded. ' I have much to learn at Richford.'

' I cann't spare ye, sir,' cried Mrs. Chump. ' I cann't go before that fam'ly quite alone. They 're a tarr'ble fam'ly. Oh ! I 'll be goin' on my knees to ye, Mr. Pow's. Weren't ye sent by heaven now ? And you to run away ! And if you 're woundud, won't I have a carr'ge from the station, which 'll be grander to go in, and impose on 'em, ye know. Pray, sir ! I entreat ye ! '

The tears burst from her eyes, and her hot hand clung to his imploringly.

Merthyr was a witness of the return of Mrs. Chump to Brookfield. In that erewhile abode of Fine Shades,

the Nice Feelings had foundered. The circle of a year, beginning so fairly for them, enfolded the ladies and their first great scheme of life. Emilia had been a touchstone to this family. They could not know it in their deep affliction, but in manner they had much improved. Their welcome of Mrs. Chump was an admirable seasoning of stateliness with kindness. Cornelia and Arabella took her hand, listening with an incomparable soft smile to her first protestations, which they quieted, and then led her to Mr. Pole ; of whom it may be said, that an accomplished coquette could not in his situation have behaved with a finer skill ; so that, albeit received back into the house, Mrs. Chump had yet to discover what her footing there was to be, and trembled like the meanest of culprits. Mr. Pole shook her hand warmly, tenderly, almost tearfully, and said to the melted woman : 'You 're right, Martha ; it 's much better for us to examine accounts in a friendly way, than to have strangers and lawyers, and what not—people who can't possibly know the whole history, don't you see—meddling and making a scandal ; and I 'm much obliged to you for coming.'

Vainly Mrs. Chump employed alternately innuendo and outcry to make him perceive that her coming involved a softer business, and that to money, she having it now, she gave not a thought. He assured her that in future she must ; that such was his express desire ; that it was her duty to herself and others. And while saying this, which seemed to indicate that widowhood would be her state as far as he was concerned, he pressed her hand with extreme sweetness, and his bird's eyes twinkled obligingly. It is to be feared that Mr. Pole had passed the age of improvement, save in his peculiar art. After a time Nature stops, and says to us 'thou art now what thou wilt be.'

Cornelia was in black from neck to foot. She joined

the conversation as the others did, and indeed more flowingly than Adela, whose visage was soured. It was Cornelia to whom Merthyr explained his temporary subjection to the piteous appeals of Mrs. Chump. She smiled humorously to reassure him of her perfect comprehension of the apology for his visit, and of his welcome: and they talked, argued a little, differed, until the terrible thought that he talked, and even looked like some one else, drew the blood from her lips, and robbed her pulses of their play. She spoke of Emilia, saying plainly and humbly: 'All we have is owing to her.' Arabella spoke of Emilia likewise, but with a shade of the foregone tone of patronage. 'She will always be our dear little sister.' Adela continued silent, as with ears awake for the opening of a door. Was it in ever-thwarted anticipation of the coming of Sir Twickenham?

Merthyr's inquiry after Wilfrid produced a momentary hesitation on Cornelia's part. 'He has gone to Verona. We have an uncle in the Austrian service,' she said; and Merthyr bowed.

What was this tale of Emilia, that grew more and more perplexing as he heard it bit by bit? The explanation awaited him at Richford. There, when Georgiana had clasped her brother in one last jealous embrace, she gave him the following letter straightway, to save him, haply, from the false shame of that eager demand for one, which she saw ready to leap to words in his eyes. He read it, sitting in the Richford library alone, while the great rhododendron bloomed outside, above the shaven sunny sward, looking like a monstrous tropic bird alighted to brood an hour in full sunlight.

'My Friend!

'I would say my Beloved! I will not write it, for it would be false. I have read of the defeat. Why was a

battle risked at that cruel place ! Here are we to be again for so many years before we can win God to be on our side ! And I—do you not know ? we used to talk of it !—I never can think it the Devil who has got the upper hand. What succeeds, I always think should succeed—was meant to, because the sky looks clear over it. This knocks a blow at my heart and keeps it silent and only just beating. I feel that you are safe. That, I am thankful for. If you were not, God would warn me, and not let me mock him with thanks when I pray. I pray till my eyelids burn, on purpose to get a warning if there is any black messenger to be sent to me. I do not believe it.

'For three years I am a prisoner. I go to the Conservatorio in Milan with Mr. Pericles, and my poor little mother, who cries, asking me where she will be among such a people, until I wonder she should be my mother. My voice has returned. Oh, Merthyr ! my dear, calm friend ! to keep calling you friend, and friend, puts me to sleep softly !—Yes, I have my voice. I felt I had it, like some one in a room with us when we will not open our eyes. There was misery everywhere, and yet I was glad. I kept it secret. I began to feel myself above the world. I dreamed of what I would do for everybody. I thought of you least ! I tell you so, and take a scourge and scourge myself, for it is true that in her new joy this miserable creature that I am thought of you least. Now I have the punishment !

'My friend ! the Poles were at the mercy of Mr. Pericles : Wilfrid had struck him : Mr. Pericles was angry and full of mischief. Those dear people had been kind to me, and I heard they were poor. I felt money in my breast, in my throat, that only wanted coining. I went to Georgiana, and oh ! how truly she proved to me that she loves you better than I do. She refused to part with money that you might soon want. I laid a scheme

for Mr. Pericles to hear me sing. He heard me, and my scheme succeeded. If Italy knew as well as I, she would never let her voice be heard till she is sure of it :—Yes ! from foot to head, I knew it was impossible to fail. If a country means to be free, the fire must run through it and make it feel that certainty. Then—away the whitecoat ! I sang, and the man twisted, as if I had bent him in my hand. He rushed to me, and offered me any terms I pleased, if for three years I would go to the Conservatorio at Milan, and learn submissively. It is a little grief to me that I think this man loves music more deeply than I do. In the two things I love best, the love of others exceeds mine. I named a sum of money —immense ! and I desired that Mr. Pericles should assist Mr. Pole in his business. He consented at once to everything. The next day he gave me the money, and I signed my name and pledged my honour to an engagement. My friends were relieved.

'It was then I began to think of you. I had not to study the matter long to learn that I did not love you : and I will not trust my own feelings as they come to me now. I judge myself by my acts, or, Merthyr ! I should sink to the ground like a dead body when I think of separation from you for three years. But, what am I ? I am a raw girl. I command nothing but raw and flighty hearts of men. Are they worth anything ? Let me study three years, without any talk of hearts at all. It commenced too early, and has left nothing to me but a dreadful knowledge of the weakness in most people :— not in you !

'If I might call you my Beloved ! and so chain myself to you, I think I should have all your firmness and double my strength. I will not ; for I will not have what I do not deserve. I think of you reading this, till I try to get to you ; my heart is like a bird caught in the hands

of a cruel boy. By what I have done I know I do not love you. Must we half-despise a man to love him? May no dear woman that I know ever marry the man she first loves! My misery now is gladness, is like raindrops on rising wings, if I say to myself, "Free! free, Emilia!" I am bound for three years, but I smile at such a bondage to my body. Evviva! my soul is free! Three years of freedom, and no sounding of myself—three years of growing and studying; three years of idle heart!—Merthyr! I throb to think that those three years—true man! my hero, I may call you!—those three years may make me worthy of you. And if you have given all to Italy, that a daughter of Italy should help to return it, seems, my friend, so tenderly sweet—here is the first drop from my eyes!

'I would break what you call a Sentiment: I broke my word to Wilfrid. But this sight of money has a meaning that I cannot conquer. I know you would not wish me to for your own pleasure; and therefore I go. I hope to be growing; I fly like a seed to Italy. Let me drill, and take sharp words, and fret at trifles! I lift my face to that prospect as if I smelt new air. I am changeing—I have no dreams of Italy, no longings, but go to see her like a machine ready to do my work. Whoever speaks to me, I feel that I look at them and know them. I see the faults of my country—Oh, beloved Brescians! not yours, Florentines! nor yours, dear Venice! We will be silent when they speak of the Milanese, till Italy can say to them, "*That* conduct is not Italian, my children." I see the faults. Nothing vexes me.

'Addio! My friend, we will speak English in dear England! Tell all that I shall never forget England! My English Merthyr! the blood you have shed is not for a woman. The blood that you have shed, laurels

spring from it! For a woman, the blood spilt is sickly and poor, and nourishes nothing. I shudder at the thought of one we knew. He makes Love seem like a yellow light over a plague-spotted city, like a painting I have seen. Good-bye to the name of Love for three years! My engagement to Mr. Pericles is that I am not to write, not to receive letters. To you I say now, trust me for three years! Merthyr's answer is already in my bosom. Beloved!—let me say it once—when the answer to any noble thing I might ask of you is in my bosom instantly, is not that as much as marriage? But be under no deception. See me as I am. Oh, Good-bye! good-bye! Good-bye to you! Good-bye to England!

'I am,
'Most humbly and affectionately,
'Your friend,
'And her daughter by the mother's side,

'EMILIA ALESSANDRA BELLONI.'

THE END

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